



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
8 December 2015

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Environmental Policy

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development

Eleventh meeting

Geneva, 15 and 16 February 2016

Item 2 (b) of the provisional agenda

Preparations for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries in 2016: official documents for consideration at the High-level Segment on Education for Sustainable Development

Draft ministerial statement for the High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries

Summary

In April 2014, at its ninth meeting, the Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development reconfirmed its decision to prepare a high-level meeting of education and environment ministries in the framework of the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8–10 June 2016), including the preparation of a draft ministerial statement (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2014/2, para. 36). In June 2015, at its tenth meeting, the Steering Committee discussed and reviewed a zero draft of the statement prepared by the Bureau and mandated the secretariat to incorporate the suggested changes (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2015/2, para. 37).

The present document contains the text of the revised draft ministerial statement approved by the Bureau and the Chair, which was circulated to the Steering Committee members at the end of June 2015. At its twenty-first session, in October 2015, the Committee on Environmental Policy took note of the document proposed as one of the draft outcomes of the Batumi Conference and invited all stakeholders to finalize their proposals in time for submission to the Committee's special session (Geneva, 23–25 February 2016).

The Steering Committee on ESD is expected to consider the draft ministerial statement at its eleventh session and to finalize it for submission to ministers in Batumi.

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We, Ministers working on education and the environment from the countries of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region,

Recalling the decisions of the Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference in Belgrade in 2007, including the Declaration “Building Bridges to the Future” (ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/8) and the Statement on Education for Sustainable Development (ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/4/Add.1), made by the Ministers of Education and Environment at the joint session on education for sustainable development (ESD), which called for the holding of future ministerial segments on ESD on a regular basis, preferably under the aegis of the Environment for Europe process, and urging countries to further strengthen efforts for the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD at all levels by the end of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005–2014),

Reconfirming our vision for the future of our region that embraces common values of solidarity, equality and mutual respect between people, countries and generations, and is characterized by sustainable development, including economic vitality, justice, social cohesion, environmental protection and the sustainable management of natural resources,

Reaffirming the statements and commitments made by the Ministers of Education and Environment at the joint session on ESD of the Belgrade Ministerial Conference and reflected in the Statement adopted there,

Recognizing the importance of ESD as an essential tool for promoting the changes needed to achieve sustainable development, and more specifically in addressing the critical challenges of our region, including poverty eradication, protection of human rights, disaster risk reduction, accelerating the shift towards sustainable consumption and production patterns, climate change, biodiversity loss and water scarcity,

Emphasizing the key role of ESD in implementing the green economy approach by providing the necessary educational foundations to help shift mindsets towards sustainable development and addressing key issues for the transition towards a green economy (i.e. raised awareness, increased public participation and sustainable consumption, and lifestyle changes), as well as reskilling and retooling the labour force,

Celebrating the success in the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development, taking into consideration the findings of the third evaluation report of the Strategy (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2015/3), in particular, the considerable good practices generated by a wide range of stakeholders in the ECE region, as well as the achievements made on ESD indicators, whole-institution planning and teacher competences, the important advances made in integrating ESD in education policy and curricula as well as aligning education objectives with national sustainable development visions and goals,

Recognizing the central role of the ECE Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development in promoting ESD in the region through demonstrated successful cooperation between the environment and education sectors, and also recognizing the important contribution of other relevant sectors and stakeholders, especially educators, non-governmental organizations and networks, business, youth and the media,

Emphasizing the importance of continued cooperation between ECE and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the ECE future implementation framework for ESD and the UNESCO Global Action Programme on ESD, endorsed by the UNESCO General Conference in 2013 (37 C/Resolution 12) as a follow-up to the United Nations Decade of ESD (2005–2014),

Appreciating the contributions to the Global Action Programme Launch Commitments to ESD made by a large number of stakeholders of the ECE region,

Supporting the efforts to strengthen synergies with other global and regional processes aimed at achieving ESD and sustainable development, including the Environment for Europe process, the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development and its Action Plan, the Incheon Declaration of the World Education Forum 2015 (“Education 2030: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all”), multilateral environmental conventions, such as the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians and its Conference of the Parties 2014 decision on awareness-raising, education and public participation (COP4/9), and other relevant international, regional and national processes,

Welcoming the recently signed Memorandum of Understanding between the United Nations Environment Programme and ECE to provide coherent assistance to member States and reinforce collaboration on environmental protection, supporting the shift to a green economy and promoting sustainable development, including the implementation of the UNESCO Roadmap for Implementing the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development in the region,

Taking into consideration that ESD will be included in the United Nations post-2015 development agenda as part of the proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and therefore the UNECE Strategy for ESD will contribute to its achievement,

Recognizing that the implementation of the Strategy for ESD is a continuous, long-term, multi-stakeholder and cross-cutting process that provides for a better understanding and enhanced competencies related to all aspects of sustainable development,

Taking into account the challenges and needs identified by the ECE member States in their national implementation reports on the Strategy, and acknowledging that some countries, particularly countries with economies in transition, may continue to need support, including donor support, to carry out relevant activities,

1. *Strongly support* the continuation of the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD at a regional level beyond the first decade (2005–2015) of its implementation, aligning with the first five-year phase of the Global Action Programme, which runs till 2019, as well as its follow-up phases;

2. *Commit* member States to continue advancing the three “vertical” priority action areas under the Strategy:

(a) Encouraging whole-institutional approaches by establishing ESD school plans in every school or embedding ESD in existing school plans in every school by 2019;

(b) Promoting the extension of ESD in teacher education and in training of all educators;

(c) Strengthening technical and vocational education and training in support of sustainable development and the transition to a green economy;

3. *Also commit* member States to continue advancing the three “horizontal” priority action areas under the Strategy:

(a) Strengthening integration of ESD in both international and national education and sustainable development policies and other relevant processes;

(b) Linking ESD in formal, informal and non-formal education;

(c) Acknowledging the important role of networks, including those of civil society, academia and science, non-governmental organizations, business and enterprises, in implementing ESD;

4. *Urge* our Governments to allocate and mobilize substantial national resources to ensure the continuation, development, consolidation and expansion of ESD, fostering national and local ESD processes for the implementation of the future framework;

5. *Also urge* our Governments to use ESD in implementing the post-2015 development agenda, in particular, to achieve the SDG 4 dedicated to education and more specifically target 4.7, but also recognizing ESD as a cross-cutting theme which serves as an efficient tool in achieving the other SDGs;

6. *Invite* our Governments to go further in monitoring the implementation process based on the experience from the previous monitoring and evaluation methodology, and to report on national progress to ECE. The future monitoring and evaluation work should be aligned as much as possible with the Global Action Programme reporting scheme, while also allowing for comparability of the reporting outcomes with previous ECE national implementation reporting exercises, as well as SDGs reporting towards national and planetary sustainability;

7. *Invite* ECE to further strengthen cooperation with UNESCO, the lead agency for the Global Action Programme, as a key partner in the Partnership Network for its implementation, in order to make use of all available synergies;

8. *Request* ECE to continue providing secretariat support to further advance ESD in the region by enhancing, inter alia, collaboration with the networks¹ in the Aichi-Nagoya Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development;

9. *Decide* to extend the mandate of the Steering Committee until 2019 and request it to prepare, with the support of the ECE secretariat, a workplan and budget for the post-2015 implementation of the Strategy for a period of four years. This should include targeted assistance activities, taking into account the results of the final evaluation report on the implementation of the Strategy, as well as needs identified by the subregional and national capacity-building activities held in South-Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Mediterranean and those expressed by the member States;

10. *Invite* stakeholders as well as bilateral and multilateral donors to continue contributing to and supporting the implementation process;

11. *Reconfirm* that future ECE ministerial high-level meetings on ESD should be held on a regular basis, preferably at the Environment for Europe conferences, as appropriate, providing a broad framework bringing together a wide range of stakeholders.

¹ European network of the Man and Biosphere Programme and the relevant sites of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, the World Heritage Sites as well as the UNESCO ESD Chairs and the UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network.