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Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Environmental Policy

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

Twelfth meeting

Geneva, 20 and 21 April 2017

Report of the Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development on its twelfth meeting

I. Introduction

1. The twelfth meeting of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development was held on 20 and 21 April 2017 in Geneva, Switzerland.

A. Attendance

2. Delegations from 18 ECE member States attended the meeting: Armenia, Belarus, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Norway, Romania, Slovenia, Switzerland, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

3. From the United Nations system, representatives of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) participated.

4. A representative of the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia also participated in the meeting.

5. In addition, representatives of the following non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and educational institutions attended the meeting: the Regional Centre of Expertise "ECODEMIA" (Belarus); NGO "Education, Ecology, Sustainable Development", National Coordinative Centre of Methodology for Education for Sustainable Development of SEA (Ukraine); Swedish International Centre of Education for Sustainable Development (Sweden); and Virtual Education (Italy).

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B. Adoption of the agenda

6. The Steering Committee adopted the agenda for its twelfth meeting as set out in document ECE/CEP/AC.13/2017/1.

II. Election of officers

7. The Steering Committee elected its chair, vice-chair, bureau members and observers as follows:

Chair:

Ms. Aravella Zachariou (Cyprus)

Vice-Chair:

Ms. Jyldyz Duishenova (Kyrgyzstan)

Bureau members:

Ms. Nino Gokhelashvili (Georgia) (alternate: Ms. Manana Ratiani (Georgia))

Ms. Imbi Henno (Estonia)

Mr. Reiner Mathar (Germany) (alternate: Ms. Bianca Bilgram (Germany))

The two NGO representatives elected to the Bureau as observers were: Ms. Irina Semko ("Regional Centre of Expertise" ECODEMIA (Belarus)) and Mr. Jiri Dlouhy (ECO Forum (Czechia)).

8. The Steering Committee reiterated that in the absence of the elected Bureau member from the particular member State the functions of the Bureau member could be assumed by another representative of that member State present at a particular meeting.

9. The Steering Committee also reiterated that interested member States should consider nominating candidates for Bureau membership.

III. Outcomes of the Batumi High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries and future work

10. The secretariat presented the major outcomes of the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8-10 June 2016) and the High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries held within its framework and their links to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), as well as the implications for the future work of the Committee.

11. The Steering Committee took note of the presentation by the secretariat.

IV. Implementation of the Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development

12. Regarding progress in implementing the ECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development, the secretariat presented the results of the voluntary information-sharing exercise in which 13 member States had participated by filling in a brief questionnaire on progress made and challenges encountered in implementing the three "vertical" priority action areas adopted at the Batumi High-level Meeting, i.e.: (a) encouraging whole-institution approaches by establishing education for sustainable development school plans, or embedding education for sustainable development in existing school plans, for every school by 2019; (b) promoting the extension of education for sustainable development in

teacher education and in the training of all educators; and (c) strengthening technical and vocational education and training in support of sustainable development and the transition to a green economy. The representatives of Belarus, Belgium (Flemish Region), Cyprus, Germany, Italy, and Georgia also made presentations.

13. The Steering Committee took note of the presentations and thanked all the countries that had submitted informal reports.

14. The secretariat presented the outcomes of various capacity-building activities. Several delegates also presented good practice examples from their countries.

15. The Steering Committee took note of the presentations and asked the secretariat to upload the presentations on the meeting website.

16. A representative of Belarus reported on a capacity-building workshop on the promotion of education for sustainable development held on 25 and 26 April 2016 in Minsk. The workshop had been organized with financial support from the Swiss Government and the cooperation of the ECE secretariat. The Committee took note of the presentation by Belarus and welcomed the high assessment of the results of the workshop by the host Country. The Committee also thanked the Swiss Government for the willingness expressed during the meeting to continue cooperation on capacity-building activities under the ECE Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in the future, on the assumption that other member States would also continue to support the further implementation of the Strategy. The Committee invited member States to contribute further to capacity-building activities and asked the secretariat to continue cooperation with interested member States in that direction.

V. Recent activities to promote education for sustainable development in other international forums

17. A representative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Section for Education for Sustainable Development updated participants by audio link on the activities implemented in the framework of the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development (Global Action Programme) since the Steering Committee's eleventh meeting. The speaker recalled that UNESCO was the lead agency for education for sustainable development within the United Nations system. The bulk of the work consisted in providing support to member States in reorienting education and also coordinating the Global Action Programme through key partners and flagship projects, and through working on raising awareness and the visibility of education for sustainable development. Global coordination of the Global Action Programme by UNESCO was built on five elements: setting the global agenda around education for sustainable development; building a new momentum; working with partnerships; promoting a global community of practice; and showcasing good practices.

18. The UNESCO representative highlighted that, in its work on the global level, mainly focusing on providing support to countries and its partners, UNESCO was guided by target 4.7 of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on education. Some opportunities and challenges faced by UNESCO in implementing the Global Action Programme were mentioned. The presence of education for sustainable development at the international level had increased, but some challenges were still being faced, including: moving from very innovative pilot projects to the policy level; moving from successful small-scale projects to a larger scale that could be replicated everywhere; and making sure that education for sustainable development was mainstreamed in every educational and learning programme and opportunity. With regard to the scaling up of initiatives, the representative noted that such

activities in particular required time, energy, partnerships with other organizations and human resources.

19. The 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals focused on how to fully integrate and mainstream sustainable development into many actions in five sectors or “Ps”: the planet, people, peace, prosperity and partnership. To help member States and key partners do that through education for sustainable development, UNESCO had produced the publication, *Education for Sustainable Development Goals: Learning Objectives*,¹ which had been officially launched in Canada during the UNESCO week in Ottawa in March 2017. The publication served as a concise guidance on learning content and approaches to teach key sustainable development challenges. The guide was structured around the Sustainable Development Goals, providing age-specific learning content for each Goal, and addressed key competencies needed to implement the Goals, as well as transformative pedagogies to teach them.

20. One of the main tasks of UNESCO was to help monitoring Sustainable Development Goal target 4.7 and provide inputs for overall monitoring of Goal 4 and behaviour change, which included contributing to an online database for reporting initiatives related to target 4.7 and developing thematic reports related to target 4.7. To discuss the future of education for sustainable development after the completion of the first phase of the Global Action Programme in 2019, UNESCO had already organized two symposiums — one in Omori, Japan, and another in Gelsenkirchen, Germany — and three more would be held in South Africa, the United Arab Emirates (Dubai) and Latin America before 2019.

21. Implementation of the Global Action Programme was driven by partner networks consisting of 85 key partner organizations from around the world, including ECE. The last annual consultation meeting of the Global Action Programme Partner Network had been held in July 2016 at UNESCO headquarters in Paris with the aim to review the progress and reorient approaches with regard to the flagship projects for each priority action area.

22. The representative of UNESCO further reported on the outcomes of the Global Action Programme Global Forum held in Ottawa in early March 2017 to review implementation of the Global Action Programme since the 2014 World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development, discuss emerging issues and innovative developments in education for sustainable development and plans for the coming years of the Global Action Programme. The meeting had been organized back to back with the third Forum on Global Citizenship Education. The review of Global Action Programme had showed that, in spite of the progress achieved, further work had to be done, in particular on strengthening partnerships to better integrate and scale-up education for sustainable development and Global Action Programme implementation activities.

23. At the end of his presentation, the UNESCO representative informed the Committee about the forthcoming and future activities to be held by the members of partner networks before the end of the first phase of the Global Action Programme’s implementation in 2019. The activities included finalizing the mid-term implementation report and preparing a progress report on implementation to be presented at the seventy-second session of the General Assembly in the third quarter of 2017. In 2019, the Global Review Forum for the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development would be held to evaluate the outcomes of the first phase of the programme’s implementation.

¹ Paris, 2017. Available from <http://en.unesco.org/education2030-sdg4>.

24. The Steering Committee took note of the presentation by the representative of UNESCO. It welcomed the existing cooperation with UNESCO and expressed its willingness to continue joint work for achieving relevant Sustainable Development Goals.

VI. Draft workplan for 2017–2019

25. The Steering Committee discussed the draft workplan for 2017–2019 for the Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2017/3). The Committee requested the secretariat to finalize the text with any proposed revisions, as necessary, and to prepare and submit the final draft as an official document for the thirteenth meeting of the Steering Committee in 2018.

26. The Steering Committee also asked the secretariat to prepare the revised version of the reporting format before the end of 2017 for the next mandatory national reporting exercise to be held in 2018.

VII. Status of the trust fund and resource requirements for 2017–2019

27. The secretariat presented its assessment of the status of the trust fund and resource requirements for 2017–2019. The Committee took note of the presentation and also the situation with regard to financial reporting and changing administrative procedures owing to the switch of ECE (and the United Nations as a whole) to the Umoja enterprise management system.

28. The Committee noted with concern that at present the funds supporting the ECE education for sustainable development process had practically been exhausted and, as a result, the level of secretarial support would significantly diminish immediately after the present meeting owing to the end of the contract of the dedicated staff member for the process.

29. The Committee expressed its appreciation to the secretariat for enabling the participation of representatives from eligible member States, notwithstanding the lack of available sources for that purpose in the trust fund; the secretariat had been able to find a one-off possibility to invite six participants from the eligible countries to the capacity-building workshop held in Geneva on April 19, with the possibility of subsequently participating in the Steering Committee meeting during the following two days.

30. The Committee expressed its gratitude to the member States that had made contributions in support of the education for sustainable development process during the period since the last Steering Committee meeting. It also welcomed the expressions of future support from several member States.

31. In view of the critical status of the funds, the Steering Committee requested the secretariat to prepare and send out letters to the education and environment ministries of member State Governments asking them to consider making financial contributions in support of the ECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development. The Committee noted that similar letters had been sent to member State Governments in the third quarter of 2016 to invite Governments to consider preliminary contributions for 2017–2019.

VIII. Strengthening synergies with other organizations and processes

32. The representative of Cyprus informed participants about the Ministerial Conference on the Action Plan for Education for Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean, held in Nicosia on 8 and 9 December 2016. The Conference had been organized by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus with the support of the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development, the scientific support of the UNESCO Chair on Sustainable Development Management and Education in the Mediterranean and in cooperation with the European Union Horizon 2020 initiative, the League of Arab States, the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development under the Action Plan for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Sustainable Development of the Coastal Areas of the Mediterranean and ECE. The Conference had made a concrete contribution to the UNESCO Global Action Programme, as the Action Plan for Education for Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean was one of its flagship projects (under the priority area of “advancing policy”), with the purpose of strengthening synergies with other organizations and processes.

33. The Ministerial Conference culminated in the adoption of the Action Plan on Education for Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean, identifying 16 priority thematic issues around which specific regional programmes and projects should be further enhanced or newly developed, inter alia: climate change adaptation and mitigation; integrated water resources management; empowerment of women and young people; sustainable cities; marine resources; sustainable consumption and production patterns; and the migration and refugee crisis.

34. Participants at the Conference had also adopted the Nicosia Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development and had endorsed the establishment of the Mediterranean Committee on Education for Sustainable Development, open to all countries in the region, to follow-up and implement the Action Plan.

35. The speaker highlighted the important impact of the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable, adopted in 2014, which had: (a) contributed to the creation of a dynamic network of countries and organizations and to the promotion of synergies at the bilateral level among countries; (b) provided potential to focus on issues of concern for the Mediterranean and an opportunity for connecting with different strategies (e.g., the ECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development), and to connect them with the Sustainable Development Goals; and (c) increased mobility for cooperation at the Mediterranean level and to use funding tools.

36. The representative of Cyprus said that the first meeting of the Mediterranean Committee for Education for Sustainable Development would take place on 20 and 21 November 2017, and the Government of Cyprus was now in the process of sending official invitation letters to all Governments.

37. The representative of Hungary gave a brief presentation on cooperation activities in the field of education for sustainable development held in the framework of the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Carpathian Convention), which has been signed in May 2003 by the seven Carpathian States (Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine). The Carpathian Convention was coordinated by UNEP and provided the framework for cooperation among policymakers, scientists, authorities and local communities. Hungary would take over the presidency of the Carpathian Convention from October 2017 to October 2020. The Conference of the Parties to the Convention would take place from 10 to 12 October 2017 in Lillafüred, Hungary, and the topic of education for sustainable development was included on the

agenda. ECE education for sustainable development focal points from the Carpathian countries were welcome to participate.

38. Another possibility for international cooperation in the field of education for sustainable development was the Forum Carpathicum, held every second year, which was a scientific conference on the issues of sustainable development in the Carpathians. In 2017 the conference had been held in Romania, where the issue of education for sustainable development had been considered for the first time on the agenda. In 2018, the Forum would be held in Hungary and the subject of education for sustainable development would be included as a core priority on the agenda. All Carpathian education for sustainable development experts and members of the scientific community would be invited to participate by the Government of Hungary.

39. A representative from Ukraine reported on efforts to strengthen synergies with other organizations and processes during the implementation of the ECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development in Ukraine. The speaker informed the Committee about the main directions of cooperation for developing education for sustainable development and achieving sustainable development goals in the country, the national cooperation partnership network and also the main directions and content of environmental curricula of the institutions of the natural reserve fund, functioning under the auspices of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine.

40. The representative of the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia highlighted the Centre's experience on subregional cooperation partnership in the Central Asian region and showcased a number of new initiatives and good practices of joint cooperation aimed at the implementation of the ECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development in Central Asia.

41. The Steering Committee took note of the presentations on strengthening synergies with other organizations and processes. It welcomed the information and called for the further strengthening of synergies with other organizations and processes, especially in the light of the 2030 Agenda.

IX. Mainstreaming gender issues in education for sustainable development

42. A discussion was held on mainstreaming gender issues in education for sustainable development. The Steering Committee took note of the discussion, and the proposal of the representative of Belarus to create an ad hoc working group to consider gender aspects of education for sustainable development in view of the 2030 Agenda. The Committee asked interested members to follow up the issue further and to provide information in that regard at the next meeting of the Committee.

X. Calendar of meetings

43. The Steering Committee agreed to hold its thirteenth meeting on 3 and 4 May 2018 in Geneva.

XI. Other business

44. The Committee took note of the draft project developed by the secretariat aimed at capacity-building in some countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. It noted the interest expressed by the delegates from the subregion in the implementation of

the proposed project in their countries, with the understanding that the details of the project could be modified taking into consideration the specific needs and requirements from the sides of both potential donors and beneficiaries. The Committee invited its members to consider promoting the project through relevant bilateral and/or multilateral consultations, including within their Governments, with a view to mobilizing donor interest for its implementation.

45. The Steering Committee asked the secretariat to upload on the meeting website the presentations and other relevant materials discussed during the meeting.
