

Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference

(8–10 June 2016, Batumi, Georgia, Sheraton Hotel)

High-level meeting of Education and Environment Ministries

8 June 2016, Batumi, Georgia, Sheraton Hotel

KEYNOTE ADDRESS OF THE CYPRUS MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE

Mr Costas Kadis

Item 3: Towards a new society: 10 years of Education for Sustainable Development

1. The importance of Education for Sustainable Development as an essential tool for promoting and addressing the critical challenges of Sustainable Development, including poverty, eradication, human rights, disaster risk reduction, climate changes, biodiversity loss, water scarcity, consumption and production and many others, has been recognized during the 10 years of the UNECE ESD Strategy, as a key driver for: a) spreading Sustainable Development across all levels and areas of education, b) changing approaches to learning, c) engaging a broad range of stakeholders for implementing ESD effectively.
2. The contribution of UNECE ESD Strategy to the United Nations Decade of ESD (2005-2014), has been acknowledged towards the initiatives and good practices generated in our region under the Strategy, in policy, curricula, tools, resources and networking, and established it as an outstanding example of regional implementation of Education for Sustainable Development and a blueprint for other regions. An indicative example is the endorsement of the Mediterranean ESD Strategy by the Union of the Mediterranean Ministerial Meeting and its adaptation at the nineteen meeting of the contracting to the protection of the marine environment and the coastal region of the Mediterranean in 2016.
3. The achievements and lessons learned in our region from the ESD Strategy implementation over the 10 past years, especially concerning its main objectives, which were analyzed in the [third evaluation report of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development](#), indicated the crucial role that UNECE ESD Strategy has to play for ESD not only regionally but also globally beyond 2015. The UNECE ESD Strategy remains a concrete tool and an effective process for implementing not only the SDG on education (goal 4), target 4.7, requiring countries to ensure by 2030 that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills to promote sustainable Development, but also implementing all the SDGs. Furthermore the ESD

Strategy can contribute regionally to the Global Action Program for Sustainable Development, as the follow up to the United Nations Decade of ESD, since the future implementation framework of the ESD Strategy is aligned, vertically and horizontally, with the priority areas of the GAP.

4. Despite the progress of the ESD Strategy, by ECE member states during the past 10 years and its dynamic and intrinsic role for ESD implementation in our region beyond 2015, however ESD, as a long term process, requires actions that will overcome the challenges and obstacles for creating opportunities that will bring ESD forward. Those are summarized in:

- Prioritization of ESD at the decision making level in key ministries and recognition of the importance of investing financially on it,
- Structural reform including the ongoing financial resources from government resources and the donor community, skilled professionals to advance ESD policies and practices and more time to continue the work,
- Putting in place mechanisms for cooperation engagement and support for formal, informal and informal learning,
- Supporting the targets on education in the new global SDG and advancing educational provisions in related regional and international environmental and sustainable development conventions and programs,
- Promoting the need for and value of ESD research, especially on theories of learning, new methodologies of teaching, approaches to monitoring and evaluation of ESD initiatives.

5. At this point, please allow me, as the Cyprus Minister of Education and Culture to stress that the UNECE ESD Strategy framework, at the Cyprus national context, constitutes the guide not only for including and strengthening ESD in Cyprus Educational Policies and other national relevant processes, but sets ESD at the core and the heart of our educational system. This is reflected to the establishment of the Curriculum of ESD on a mandatory basis in all educational levels, and through the design and implementation in each school unit of the Sustainable –Environmental Education Agenda. It is also reflected through the linkage of formal, non formal and informal education within the Network of Environmental and Sustainable Development Education Centers, as a supplementary structure to the schools on Sustainable Development issues, through the support of teachers, principals and other stakeholders with training and professional development in ESD issues, through the enhancement of educational materials in ESD, and through the strengthening of networks at the national, regional and international level. The emphasis that Cyprus Government giving to ESD, appointed Cyprus as a flagship for ESD in the Mediterranean Region.

6. Mr. Chair, Distinguished colleagues, what kind of Education do we want to develop through ESD? What kind of school do we want to realize, What changes have to be made to the established norms of ESD, so that it will not preserve the status quo but lead towards the direction and implications of change? It is our responsibility to ensure efficient regional governance and communication amongst member states for ESD. During the 10 years of UNECE ESD strategy implementation I consider that is fundamental to strengthen and intensify our efforts, so that ESD constitutes not simply part of educational and other policies, at the national, regional and international levels but, to transmit, intrinsically from policy to practice. We, as member states of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, have a crucial role to play.
7. For that reason, I strongly support the continuation of the implementation of the UNECE ESD Strategy at the regional level, beyond 2015, according to its main priority areas and in alignment with the SDGs and the GAP. Taking that opportunity and since Cyprus acknowledges the importance of ESD in the region I invite all the Ministers of Education of all the member countries of our region to participate to the Ministerial Meeting for the Adaption of an Action Plan for the ESD Med Strategy that Cyprus is organizing on 8th-9th of December 2016 in Nicosia. I am looking forward to welcoming you in Cyprus and to strengthening cooperatively our efforts for become ESD the keystone for improving the quality of life, by making our world safe, sustainable, healthy and prosperous.

Thank you

Costas Kadis
Cyprus Minister of Education and Culture
Batumi
8th of June 2016