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UNECE Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development

Third meeting

Geneva, 31 March–1 April 2008

REPORT OF THE UNECE STEERING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ON ITS THIRD MEETING

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Introduction

1. The third meeting of the UNECE Steering Committee of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) took place on 31 March and 1 April 2008 in Geneva.
2. The meeting was attended by delegates (representing both the education and the environment sectors) from Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Moldova, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.
3. Representatives of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) participated.
4. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented: the European Environment Agency (EEA), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC-CEE).
5. The following non-governmental organizations (NGOs) attended: the Ecological Movement “BIOM” and European ECO-Forum, a coalition of environmental citizens’ organizations.
6. Representatives of the following education institutions participated: Institute Florimont and the University of Zurich.
7. The list of participants is available on the UNECE website (<http://www.unece.org/env/esd/SC.Meet.htm#3rdMtg>).
8. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Andreas Karamanos (Greece).
9. Following the decisions by the second meeting of the Steering Committee on ESD and by the Joint Session on ESD at the Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (Belgrade Ministerial Conference), as well as those by the sixth meeting of the Bureau of the Steering Committee on ESD, the secretariat in consultation with the Chairperson had prepared several documents for the Steering Committee meeting. All documents for the meeting are available on the UNECE website (<http://www.unece.org/env/esd/SC.Meet.htm#3rdMtg>).

I. OPENING OF THE MEETING AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

10. The Chairperson opened the meeting. He welcomed delegates to the third meeting of the Steering Committee and congratulated them on the successful outcomes of the Joint Session on ESD at the Belgrade Ministerial Conference, one of which was the extension of the mandate until 2015 of the Steering Committee to oversee the Strategy’s implementation and to review its progress. The Chairperson highlighted the main objectives of the meeting, which were: (a) to review progress achieved in implementing the Strategy since the pilot reporting exercise was carried out; (b) to consider and adopt the draft Work Plan of Implementation for Phase II of the UNECE Strategy for ESD (2008–2010), including its substantive content, time frame and financial implications; (c) to review progress made by the UNECE Expert Group on Indicators

for ESD; and (d) to discuss the issue of competence in ESD in the education sector and how to address it in the Steering Committee's work.

11. The Steering Committee adopted the meeting agenda as set out in document ECE/CEP/AC.13/2008/1 and corrigendum 1.

II. EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT-RELATED OUTCOMES OF THE SIXTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE “ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE”

12. Ms. Monika Linn, Secretary to the Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (Belgrade, 10–12 October 2007), informed the Steering Committee about the major outcomes of the Belgrade Ministerial Conference and about those of particular relevance to ESD. The Belgrade Ministerial Conference was attended by more than 1,000 official delegates – including 60 ministers, deputy ministers and State secretaries, 16 of whom came from the education sector – as well as approximately 2,000 observers and other participants. Ministers and high-level officials from 51 UNECE member States and the European Commission discussed progress achieved in the implementation of environmental policy since the 2003 Kiev Ministerial Conference, capacity-building and partnerships, and the future of the “Environment for Europe” (EfE) process. The success of the Joint Session on ESD indicated the overwhelming support among participating actors for furthering the Strategy on ESD in practice. The education and environment ministers adopted by acclamation the Joint Statement on ESD¹, voicing their commitment to the further implementation of the Strategy as well as to the extension of the Steering Committee's mandate to oversee regional implementation of the Strategy on ESD up to 2015. The main outcomes of the Belgrade Ministerial Conference were reflected in the Ministerial Declaration² and the Chair's Summary³. One of these was the continuation of the EfE process as an important and unique partnership of UNECE member States, United Nations agencies represented in the region, other intergovernmental organizations, regional environmental centres, and NGOs and other major groups. Furthermore, participants at the Belgrade Ministerial Conference decided that the EfE process should undergo a reform to ensure that it remained relevant and valuable, as well as to strengthen its effectiveness as a mechanism for improving environmental quality and the lives of people across the UNECE region. The reform of the EfE process was being prepared by the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy during a number of dedicated meetings in 2008 with a view to its adoption by the Committee before the end of this year and its consequent endorsement by the Economic Commission for Europe at its session in spring 2009.

13. The Chairperson gave an overview of the Joint Session on ESD. He referred to the ESD-related provisions of the Ministerial Declaration and the Chair's Summary of the Belgrade Ministerial Conference. The Ministerial Declaration welcomed the efforts of all Governments to

¹ Statement on ESD by the Ministers of Education and of the Environment of the UNECE region adopted at the Joint Session on ESD (ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/4/Add.1).

² Declaration “Building Bridges to the Future” by the ministers of the UNECE region (ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/8).

³ Chair's Summary of the Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/9).

meet the objectives of the United Nations Decade of ESD as well as the Joint Statement on ESD adopted by the Joint Session, and urged countries to further strengthen efforts to implement the UNECE Strategy on ESD. The importance of the ESD process as a prerequisite and framework for capacity-building initiatives and multi-stakeholder partnership in the region was also stressed in the Declaration. The Chair's Summary included a comprehensive overview of the discussion at and outcomes of the session. The Chairperson highlighted the key conclusions concerning the future focus of ESD implementation: (a) further strengthening the initial measures in the move to ESD; (b) developing ESD competencies, teaching tools and materials and improving their content; (c) enhancing efforts regarding the conceptual transition from environmental to ESD education; and (d) promoting ESD through capacity-building and dissemination of good practices.

14. The Steering Committee agreed that the Joint Session on ESD during the Belgrade Ministerial Conference had been a culmination point in Phase I of implementation of the Strategy. It considered the achievements, lessons learned and challenges identified in the implementation of the Strategy and agreed on the way ahead. The Joint Session had shown a high commitment from Governments with respect to implementing the Strategy, and also that EfE Ministerial Conferences can be used as a platform for regional high-level promotion of the Strategy's implementation. The Steering Committee invited member States to actively participate in the EfE reform discussion, with the view to ensuring that ESD remained a component of the future EfE Conferences.

III. PROGRESS BY UNECE MEMBER STATES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNECE STRATEGY FOR EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

15. The Steering Committee heard reports by Governments on activities undertaken to implement the Strategy since the submission of the pilot national implementation reports at the end of 2006.

16. The reports by countries showed that there had been good progress made in implementing the Strategy. In many countries, there was a commitment by Governments to establish the necessary policies and institutional arrangements and mechanisms to implement the Strategy. Implementation of the initial measures (e.g. translating the Strategy into the official national languages, establishment of national focal points and establishing consultative mechanisms) had been completed in most of the countries. Most countries had also taken steps to introduce ESD into their policy and legislative documents, and many countries had started drafting national action plans for ESD. Some countries had already completed the national action plans and were working towards implementing them. Coordination and awareness-raising activities were being undertaken at the national level through the organization of ESD meetings, workshops, conferences and a variety of other events promoting and supporting ESD. Many countries were promoting the Strategy in diverse international forums. Efforts were being made to move from the environmental education to ESD. ESD information and teaching materials were being developed to support the education sector in integrating ESD in the teaching. In some countries, specific budgets were being allocated for ESD activities; however, in others (mostly in countries with economies in transition), financial constraints and the lack of resources remained a

challenge to the further implementation of ESD. Many countries had established websites that contained information relevant to ESD.

17. The interventions are available on the UNECE website (<http://www.unece.org/env/esd/SC.Meet.htm#3rdMtg>). In addition, delegations were invited to submit to the secretariat information on different ESD-related events, tools and materials and other relevant information for posting on the UNECE website, with a view to sharing this information (<http://www.unece.org/env/esd/events.htm> and <http://www.unece.org/env/esd/Useful.info.html>).

18. Although the progress varied in different countries in the region, the overall implementation of Phase I was considered successful. The implementation of Phase II (2008–2010) lay ahead and countries' efforts should be directed at strengthening the achievements of Phase I and following up on them, as well as undertaking new activities to further implementation of the Strategy.

IV. REPORT ON THE PROGRESS MADE BY THE UNECE EXPERT GROUP ON INDICATORS FOR EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

19. The Chairperson opened this item of the agenda by congratulating delegations for their active participation in the pilot reporting exercise to review progress in implementation of the Strategy for the Belgrade Ministerial Conference (<http://www.unece.org/env/esd/Implement.Gov.htm>). The feedback of 36 national implementation reports – even if the details of information differed – had been a success. The close and effective joint work between UNECE and UNESCO, especially in the area of monitoring the progress, was highly appreciated by member States. The Chairperson informed the Steering Committee that the first mandatory reporting exercise to assess the implementation of the Phase II would take place during 2010.

20. Mr. Roel van Raaij, Chairperson of the Expert Group, reported on progress made in revising the indicators and developing quality criteria (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2008/4, Information Paper No. 2, Information Paper No. 3, and the PowerPoint presentation <http://www.unece.org/env/esd/SC.Meet.htm#3rdMtg>). Following the extension of the Expert Group's mandate by the Steering Committee second meeting, the Group had revised the reporting format. The revision included the addition of one new sub-indicator (2.1.3) dedicated to teaching and learning methods under the indicator 2.1 as well as certain modifications and additions to the annexed template tables. With respect to quality criteria, the Expert Group agreed that this issue should be approached from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. A set of criteria/thresholds to access and monitor success in the implementation of the Strategy had been developed as a follow-up to the quantitative approach (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2008/4, annex I). To follow-up on the qualitative approach, the Expert Group had developed a draft list of descriptors comprising explanatory notes on relevant indicators and sub-indicators and providing good practices and examples for each of these (Information Paper No. 3). In conjunction with the informal guidance for reporting, the descriptors could serve as a valuable tool for enhancing the implementation process and its monitoring and evaluation, as well as for facilitating the exchange of experience (e.g. by sharing good practices) amongst countries.

21. The Steering Committee expressed its appreciation of the excellent work done by the Expert Group on Indicators for ESD and endorsed the revised reporting format (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2008/8). The Steering Committee also welcomed the criteria developed to assess success in the implementation of the Strategy.

22. The Steering Committee decided to extend the Expert Group's mandate until the Committee's next meeting in 2009, with the Expert Group assuming the task of finalizing the draft list of descriptors as a tool to support the reporting format. This would include revising the template for good practice (i.e. adapting it to match the reporting format) to make for more efficient use of the submitted good practices, with a view to sharing lessons learned in implementing the Strategy.

23. Regarding ESD monitoring and reporting at the global level, participants noted that the UNECE Reporting Format was used by the UNESCO Expert Group on Monitoring and Evaluation as a model for developing a questionnaire to assess the mid-term progress in implementing the United Nations Decade of ESD. The mid-term review will take place at the UNESCO World Conference on ESD, which would be held from 31 March to 2 April 2009 in Bonn, Germany. Successful progress in implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD would serve as a valuable regional contribution to this upcoming global conference.

V. HOW DO TEACHERS TEACH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT? – A PANEL ON COMPETENCE IN EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

24. The issue of competences in ESD was identified by the Joint Session at the Belgrade Ministerial Conference as a key challenge to the further ESD implementation. To address this challenge, a panel discussion was organized featuring representatives of ministries, teachers and students from both higher- and secondary-level educational institutions, and NGOs (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2008/6). To support the discussion, a paper on competence in ESD in the education sector had been prepared by the secretariat in consultation with selected experts and members of the Bureau (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2008/7).

25. The panellists reflected on existing problems and also shared experience and good practices in integrating ESD into teacher training. The panel discussion provided a useful contribution to the dialogue on competences in ESD, and revealed a great variety of approaches in addressing the development of competences, which depend on perspectives of the actors involved and the specific needs and framework conditions in different subregions. Different views were expressed on what kind of competences need to be developed, e.g. competences of educators vis-à-vis competences of the learners.

26. The representative of UNESCO stressed the importance of developing competences in ESD and welcomed the initiative by the UNECE region to play a leading role in tackling this issue, with a view to serving as a blueprint for other regions.

27. As a follow-up to the discussion, the Steering Committee asked the Expert Group on Indicators for ESD to prepare, for consideration by the next meeting of the Steering Committee, a proposal for a mandate, including the terms of reference and human and financial resources

required, for a possible expert group on competences in ESD. The Expert Group on Indicators, together with additionally invited experts in ESD competences, would meet at the UNESCO premises in Paris in mid-September of this year to develop the proposal. Countries were invited to express their interest and submit candidatures of experts with specific expertise in ESD competences to the secretariat by 1 June 2008.

VI. DRAFT WORK PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION FOR PHASE II (2008–2010) OF THE UNECE STRATEGY FOR EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

28. Following the request by the ministers at the Belgrade Ministerial Conference, the secretariat in consultation with the Chairperson and the Bureau had prepared a draft Work Plan of Implementation for Phase II (2008-2010) of the UNECE Strategy for ESD (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2008/5). The plan comprised a variety of activities aimed at coordination, capacity-building and sharing of experience to support and further the implementation of ESD in the region, including through workshops and trainings, the sharing of good practices and case studies, strengthening the use of electronic tools, awareness-raising and the review of the implementation of Phase I. The UNECE secretariat would, if resources permitted, facilitate implementation of the plan.

29. The draft Work Plan set out a roadmap of activities for the Phase II, with a view to addressing the needs and challenges identified across the UNECE region in a comprehensive way. Many of the activities would require additional resources to enable their implementation. As a prerequisite for the successful implementation of ESD, the two key priorities for Phase II were: (a) the development and the implementation of the national action plans for ESD; and (b) the development of competences in ESD.

30. The Steering Committee considered and adopted the Work Plan of Implementation for Phase II, and invited interested Governments to provide leadership for the key activities identified therein. Some delegations stressed the need to use all available resources at the subregional and national levels, in particular with respect to the Work Plan's paragraph 15. Regarding the proposed workshops in its paragraph 17, the issue of education for sustainable consumption was suggested as a theme for the Western European subregion. Italy would consider its possible leadership for this activity.

31. With regard to the financial matters relating to the implementation of the Work Plan, the Chairperson reiterated the scheme of voluntary contributions agreed by the Vilnius High-level Meeting of Environment and Education Ministries (Vilnius, 17–18 March 2005). The financial issues are reflected in the Work Plan's annex III, with updated information provided in the Information Paper No. 4 (<http://www.unece.org/env/esd/SC.Meet.htm#3rdMtg>). A number of countries expressed their interest in contributing financially to implementation of the Work Plan. The following pledges were made at the meeting: Austria (€2,000), Czech Republic (€2,000), Greece (€2,000), Slovakia (€2,000) and Sweden (200,000 SEK). Italy expressed its interest in contributing, and Canada would look into possibilities to do so. The mislaid Norwegian contribution for 2006–2007 (200,000 NOK) was identified and reallocated for the ESD activities.

32. The Steering Committee stressed that it was crucial to ensure stable and predictable funding for effective implementation of the Work Plan, and encouraged Governments and organizations to support the ESD programme. The Steering Committee requested the secretariat to send letters soliciting financial support to the Member States before summer. Countries were also invited to provide the secretariat with names of potential donors to be approached by the Chairperson of the Steering Committee. In line with the request made by ministers at the Belgrade Conference, the Steering Committee asked the secretariat to provide a clear indication on when and how the latter could intervene to change the current decision, so that in the next biennium regular budget resources could be used for ESD activities.

VII. INTERLINKAGES AND POSSIBLE MUTUAL BENEFITS OF THE UNECE PROCESS AND OTHER EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES AND ACTIVITIES

33. Delegates supported strengthening synergies between the UNECE Strategy on ESD and ESD-related activities taking place in the framework on the United Nations Decade of ESD, the Commission on Sustainable Development, the European Union (EU) and the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development. Many activities had been reported by stakeholders and UNECE member States with regard to implementing ESD, including promoting ESD and the Strategy in the relevant international forums. Norway informed the meeting about an Internet-based support system for ESD, aimed at providing a system for knowledge-building related to sustainable development (<http://sustain.no/>). Italy briefed the meeting about its leadership of the Task Force on Education for Sustainable Consumption, which had as its aim encouraging the introduction of sustainable consumption and production principles into formal, non-formal and informal learning processes. A collection of guidelines, recommendations and examples of curricula, “Here and Now Education for Sustainable Consumption”, was being prepared by the Task Force jointly with the United Nations Environment Programme and UNESCO. Italy also stressed that the Commission on Sustainable Development represented the appropriate international forum for emphasizing the interdisciplinary content of ESD and where ESD should be promoted with tangible examples of the effectiveness of education both as a means of implementation and as an accompanying measure in sectoral policies. Finland informed the meeting about an upcoming multi-stakeholder project on ESD covering the Baltic region. Canada highlighted the organization of an NGO conference scheduled to take place at the end of November 2008 in Manitoba. France announced the organization of an international conference on ESD for October 2008 in Bordeaux, during the French presidency of the European Union.

34. MIO-ECSDE⁴ presented the activities under the Mediterranean Education Initiative for Environment and Sustainability (MEDIES), with a focus on developing educational and training materials; organizing conferences, seminars and youth residential workshops; and maintaining a network of educators (<http://medies.net>). REC-CEE informed the Steering Committee on the development of a new set of environmental education materials for younger schoolchildren and schools with less technical equipment: “Green Pack Junior”, to be launched in 2008. REC-CEE also highlighted the “Course for Sustainability”, which aimed to assist government officials in

⁴ Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (<http://www.mio-ecsde.org/>). Serves as secretariat to MEDIES.

building their knowledge and skills on sustainable development issues. The course had been conducted since 2004, and had served 220 civil servants from 11 Central and Eastern European countries. The representative of Austria, on behalf of Environment and School Initiatives (ENSI), informed the meeting of the readiness of ENSI to support work related to ESD competences. ENSI was especially appropriate for this task, given the group's expertise in this domain as well as the recently accomplished EU CSCT⁵ project, which had resulted in a handbook on competencies for ESD teachers, providing a framework for integrating ESD into the curricula of teacher-training institutions. The representative of ENSI also underlined the ongoing translation of the publication *Quality criteria for ESD schools*, with Portuguese and Romanian versions already published and Russian and Croatian versions upcoming. OECD brought to the delegates' attention to its in-kind contribution to implementing the UNECE Strategy and the Decade of ESD by focusing its work on promoting the move from environmental education to ESD curricula. OECD also informed the meeting about a workshop on ESD to be held on 11 and 12 September 2008 in Paris, which would focus on: (a) the OECD national ESD strategies; (b) promoting sustainable schools based on the OECD Programme on Educational Building; (c) education for sustainable consumption; (d) a curriculum for sustainable development which went beyond environmental education; and (e) producing an Insights book on sustainable development which could be used as a secondary school-level textbook. EEA reported to the meeting on the development of the new educational "Eco Agents" website, an international learning platform targeted at children (ages 9 to 14) and educators alike aiming to raise children's awareness about current environmental issues and topics (<http://ecoagents.eea.europa.eu>). The European Community briefed the meeting on the activities carried out within the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, stressing the need to take into account corporate social responsibility vis-à-vis sustainable development (http://ec.europa.eu/sustainable/welcome/index_en.htm). Finally, European ECO-Forum informed participants about its activities relating to ESD.

35. The Steering Committee suggested organizing a side-event on ESD with a focus on education for sustainable consumption during the eighteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in 2010, the first year of the fourth implementation cycle addressing sustainable consumption and production issues.

VIII. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

36. The Steering Committee decided that its next meeting would be held at the end of February 2009, in due time to provide regional input to the UNESCO World Conference on ESD (Bonn, Germany, 31 March–2 April 2009). The Bureau would hold its sixth meeting immediately after the third meeting of the Steering Committee (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2008/2/Add.1), and its seventh meeting in November 2008.

⁵ Curriculum, Sustainable Development, Competences, Teacher Training (CSCT). Detailed information is available on the CSCT website (<http://www.csct-project.org/content/view/1/26/>).

IX. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

37. The Steering Committee also held an election of officers. It re-elected Mr. Karamanos (Greece, education sector) as its Chairperson and elected Ms. Jyldyz Duishenova (Kyrgyzstan, environment sector) as Vice-Chairperson. The Chairperson expressed his appreciation of his re-election and his continued commitment to work for the successful implementation of the ESD Strategy. Mr. Michael Scoulllos (Greece) was reappointed as assistant to the Chairperson.

38. With a view to representing in a balanced way the different subregions of UNECE, the Steering Committee elected or re-elected the members of its Bureau, as follows: Ms. Vesna Fila, (Serbia, education sector); Mr. Ara Avetisyan, (Armenia, education sector); Mr. Gerald Farthing, (Canada, education sector); Mr. Michel Ricard, (France, environment sector); Mr. Paolo Soprano (Italy, environment sector); Ms. Zvetlana Preoteasa, (Romania, education sector); and Ms. Astrid Sandås (Norway, education sector). The Chairperson and the Vice-Chairperson of the Steering Committee will serve in their respective capacities in the Bureau. The representatives of the stakeholders that participated as observers in the Bureau, namely UNESCO, the regional environmental centres, European ECO-Forum and ENSI, were invited to continue in this capacity.

X. OTHER BUSINESS

39. No other business was brought to the attention of the Steering Committee.

XI. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

40. The Chairperson informed the Steering Committee that his concluding remarks would be circulated by e-mail. The Bureau and the secretariat were requested to follow up on the decisions of the Steering Committee. The secretariat was asked to finalize the report and the list of participants for circulation to delegates after the meeting. The Chairperson thanked the Steering Committee for its constructive and efficient work, and closed the meeting.
