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**Sustainable development: education for  
sustainable development**

## **Education for sustainable development in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

### **Note by the Secretary-General**

The Secretary-General hereby transmits the report prepared by the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, in accordance with General Assembly resolution [78/156](#).

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\* [A/80/150](#).



## **Report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on education for sustainable development in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

### *Summary*

Education for sustainable development is a lifelong learning process and an integral part of quality education and has been recognized as a vital means of achieving sustainable development by the international community.

As requested by the General Assembly in its resolution [78/156](#), the present report provides a review of the implementation of the framework entitled “Education for Sustainable Development: towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals” (Education for Sustainable Development for 2030), taken note of in resolution [74/223](#). The report also includes an account of the outcomes related to education for sustainable development of the Transforming Education Summit, as well as the findings from consultations with member States, key stakeholders and United Nations entities.

## I. Introduction

1. Education for sustainable development is the response of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to the urgent challenges facing the planet. The international community has recognized on numerous occasions the importance of education for sustainable development as an integral element of quality education and a key enabler for sustainable development. It is holistic and transformational; it addresses learning content and outcomes, pedagogy and the learning environment. It enhances the cognitive, social and emotional and behavioural dimensions of learning and promotes individual and social transformation.

2. Education for sustainable development is integral to the realization of Sustainable Development Goal 4, particularly target 4.7, the aim of which is to equip all learners with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote sustainable development by 2030. As part of education for sustainable development, the Greening Education Partnership builds on those principles. Launched as a flagship initiative following the Transforming Education Summit in 2022, the Partnership is a global initiative that takes a whole-of-system approach to support countries in addressing the climate crisis by leveraging the critical role of education. The partnership works to align education systems with sustainability goals, ensuring that education contributes to both immediate and long-term solutions to global environmental challenges. Education for sustainable development empowers people with the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and behaviours to live in a way that is good for the environment, the economy and society. It is a lifelong learning process. It encourages people to make smart and responsible choices that help to create a better future for everyone and promote responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society.

3. The global framework entitled “Education for Sustainable Development: towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals” (Education for Sustainable Development for 2030)<sup>1</sup> makes it possible to produce and share knowledge, offer policy guidance and technical support to countries and implement projects on the ground. It is conducive to peer learning and innovation through information, networks and partnerships. Within that framework, UNESCO hosts the secretariat of the Greening Education Partnership, which is aimed at strengthening States’ capacity to provide quality climate change education and “greening” every aspect of learning.

4. The present report was prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution [78/156](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit at the eightieth session a report on the implementation of the resolution.

5. Given that education for sustainable development is an integral part of the Education 2030 Agenda, the present report also provides information on action taken by UNESCO, in the area of education for sustainable development, to follow up on the Transforming Education Summit. It also provides an update on developments in relation to education for sustainable development since mid-2023.

## II. Realizing Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all)

### A. Transforming education towards the realization of Goal 4

6. Education for Sustainable Development for 2030 is a key component of the Organization’s wider mandate of realizing Sustainable Development Goal 4. The

<sup>1</sup> See [www.unesco.org/en/sustainable-development/education/esd-net](http://www.unesco.org/en/sustainable-development/education/esd-net).

promotion and acceleration of progress in education for sustainable development are at the core of efforts to meet the targets of that Goal. At the Transforming Education Summit, key commitments were determined in order to align education with the Goal, focusing on sustainability, reimagining learning, and teacher training. Follow-up actions, including those under the Greening Education Partnership, will lead to a stocktaking exercise in 2025 to assess progress, address challenges and guide future efforts to achieve the Goal.

7. In the context of the Transforming Education Summit and the follow-up thereto, UNESCO has developed a monitoring tool to facilitate cross-country learning and track progress towards greening education. On the first anniversary of the Summit, UNESCO invited its member States and countries to participate in a survey on country actions to transform education and encouraged them to report on how they had translated their national statements of commitments into actions.

8. A dashboard of country commitments and actions to transform education<sup>2</sup> was then developed, and a report, *Transforming Education towards SDG4: Report of a Global Survey on Country Actions to Transform Education*,<sup>3</sup> was prepared. The Dashboard, in particular, captures progress in the field of climate and greening education.

9. The Dashboard and the survey report are key instruments that guide countries as they track their progress in fulfilling their national statements of commitments. The Dashboard allows users to filter by region and thematic area, among other features, to see the actions that countries are taking to transform education. The survey report is intended to further facilitate cross-country learning by documenting transformative actions and sharing experiences and best practices. Unlike the Dashboard, which provides an overview, the survey report offers a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of countries' responses to the survey.

## B. Transforming education: the Greening Education Partnership

10. The Transforming Education Summit convened by the Secretary-General confirmed that education must be transformed to respond to the global climate and environmental crisis. The climate crisis is disrupting education at the global level; 9 out of 10 disasters are linked to climate change, according to the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.<sup>4</sup> Extreme weather, such as floods and hurricanes, causes long school closures, displacing millions of students. Around 40 per cent of schools face risks from natural hazards, especially in coastal and extreme weather areas.<sup>5</sup> Marginalized, low-income and rural communities suffer the most, facing the more school disruptions and more limited access. For instance, Cyclone Idai in 2019 damaged over 3,000 schools in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi, affecting 1.85 million children.<sup>6</sup> Climate change also worsens gender inequality; girls are more likely to drop out due to added household duties or early marriage. These issues are connected to such United Nations objectives as Sustainable Development Goal 13 on climate action, Sustainable Development Goal 4 and the Sendai Framework for

<sup>2</sup> See [www.unesco.org/sdg4education2030/en/knowledge-hub/dashboard](http://www.unesco.org/sdg4education2030/en/knowledge-hub/dashboard).

<sup>3</sup> See [www.unesco.org/en/articles/transforming-education-towards-sdg4-report-global-survey-country-actions-transform-education](http://www.unesco.org/en/articles/transforming-education-towards-sdg4-report-global-survey-country-actions-transform-education).

<sup>4</sup> See [www.undrr.org/publication/undrr-annual-report-2021](http://www.undrr.org/publication/undrr-annual-report-2021).

<sup>5</sup> See [www.unicef.org/reports/unicef-annual-report-2020](http://www.unicef.org/reports/unicef-annual-report-2020).

<sup>6</sup> See [www.unicef.org.uk/press-releases/cyclone-idai-education-at-risk-for-more-than-305000-children-in-mozambique-unicef/](http://www.unicef.org.uk/press-releases/cyclone-idai-education-at-risk-for-more-than-305000-children-in-mozambique-unicef/).

Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, all of which promote climate-resilient education systems to protect all children, particularly the vulnerable.<sup>7</sup>

11. The Greening Education Partnership<sup>8</sup> was developed on the basis of the knowledge and practice accumulated in education for sustainable development. Its purpose is to deliver strong, coordinated and comprehensive action in order to accelerate and improve the implementation of climate change education through better coordination and collaboration, foster knowledge management and research to maintain a vibrant community of practice, and engage in advocacy, communications and monitoring. Taking a lifelong learning and whole-school approach, the Partnership includes goals on green school accreditation, including climate education in curricula, training teachers, supporting policymakers in that area and reaching adult learners. The Partnership is an open and inclusive community of 97 States and more than 1,600 organizations and institutions that support countries in accelerating the implementation of climate change education.

12. The Partnership is embedded in the work of UNESCO on education for sustainable development, for which it is the lead United Nations agency. It is focused, in particular, on the role of education in tackling climate change. Within the Partnership, countries are encouraged to take action in the following four areas of action:

- (a) Greening schools, including teacher training academies and higher education institutions, to ensure that they achieve green school accreditation;
- (b) Greening curricula by incorporating climate and environmental education and as part of the teaching materials, including pedagogy and assessment;
- (c) Greening capacity and readiness by building the capacity of key education stakeholders and providing support to all actors in order to enable them to deliver on integrating climate change and environmental education into curricula;
- (d) Greening communities to benefit all of society by engaging with the entire community through the integration of climate and environmental education in lifelong learning, and through community learning centres and learning cities.

13. Through the Partnership, members set common objectives and goals, such as developing global norms and standards, conducting global communication and advocacy for the greening education agenda and exploring opportunities for collaboration. Political will in the area of greening education is being renewed and strengthened.

14. The Partnership published its first two global guidance documents, namely the green school quality standard<sup>9</sup> and the greening curriculum guidance,<sup>10</sup> on 6 June 2024. They are intended to help to create common global standards and support the monitoring of progress. The documents have been released with the goals that, by 2030, 50 per cent of schools will be aligned on the green standard and 90 per cent of curricula will include climate change.

15. The Partnership has launched consultations with a view to formulating global guidance on the two remaining areas, namely teacher training and communities. Those guidance documents are being created by the co-coordinators and by members of the working group on greening teacher training and education system capacities and the working group on greening communities, led by the Partnership, Education

<sup>7</sup> See [www.unrr.org/publication/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030](http://www.unrr.org/publication/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030).

<sup>8</sup> See [www.unesco.org/en/sustainable-development/education/greening-future](http://www.unesco.org/en/sustainable-development/education/greening-future).

<sup>9</sup> See <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000390028>.

<sup>10</sup> See <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000390022>.

International, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning and the World Organization of the Scout Movement.

16. The Partnership is strengthening communication and advocacy for greening education. In order to raise awareness of the two guidance documents issued, a social media campaign using the “Greening education” hashtag (#greeningeducation)<sup>11</sup> was launched in 2024. The campaign provided user-friendly information in relation to the content of the documents and encouraged schools to share on social media the greening activities being conducted. Some 40 social media assets were shared across the accounts of UNESCO. The hashtag gained a total of 326 mentions and nearly 12,000 likes, with a social media reach of 1.3 million. Dozens of schools and universities from around the world posted films and photographs from their schools and communities.

### **C. Monitoring progress towards achieving target 4.7 of the Goals, on education for sustainable development**

17. Through education, learners are encouraged to be responsible actors who contribute to creating a more sustainable world. As part of target 4.7 of the Goals, education for sustainable development equips and empowers learners with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to act for the planet and address global challenges. It promotes personal and societal transformative action in learners of all ages by providing them with tools to design new sustainable systems and ways of living.

18. Education for sustainable development has significantly contributed to advancing target 4.7 by enhancing the quality and relevance of education. By integrating sustainability into curricula, education for sustainable development equips students with the skills and knowledge to address global challenges such as climate change, inequality and conflict. It promotes critical thinking, global citizenship and problem-solving, supporting the broader goals of transformative education. Through such initiatives as the Greening Education Partnership, UNESCO reinforces the role of education in achieving sustainable development by empowering learners to actively engage in building a more sustainable and just future.

19. As the recognized lead agency on education for sustainable development, and in the context of Goal 4, UNESCO leads the monitoring of progress towards achieving target 4.7. It promotes quality education by ensuring that learners develop relevant understanding, skills and attitudes to respond to the challenges facing the world. It emphasizes the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, in close alignment with the vision set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

20. The unanimous adoption in 2023 of the Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development<sup>12</sup> was a watershed moment in which the 194 States members of UNESCO recognized that, if we are to build lasting peace, we need education that promotes tolerance, respect and shared humanity. The revised text sets out a new understanding of peace as a positive and participatory process to build just, inclusive, healthy, sustainable and peaceful societies. It is the result of a three-step, inclusive, participatory and transparent consultative process spanning two years, involving more than 3,000 experts from

<sup>11</sup> See [www.unesco.org/en/sustainable-development/education/campaign](http://www.unesco.org/en/sustainable-development/education/campaign).

<sup>12</sup> See [www.unesco.org/en/global-citizenship-peace-education/recommendation](http://www.unesco.org/en/global-citizenship-peace-education/recommendation).

more than 130 countries. Following its adoption, UNESCO has endeavoured to support countries to translate the spirit of the Recommendation into action. To facilitate that process, an explainer brochure was developed outlining key aspects of the Recommendation in a user-friendly manner. UNESCO is also developing capacity-building tools, including an implementation guide and a policy review tool, and preparing the reporting process.

21. UNESCO has undertaken a study<sup>13</sup> to analyse content on climate change and environmental issues in science and social science curricula in secondary education around the world and to identify examples of good practice. The results were published and presented at the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in December 2023. The findings indicate that accelerated efforts are needed. In a study of more than 530 Grade 9 science and social science curricula from 85 countries, it was found that 69 per cent of curricula contained no references to climate change and 66 per cent had no references to sustainability. Some 84 per cent of curricula included content on the environment. Within that total, discussions of environmental processes, environmental science or environmental issues were most common, followed by content specifically on ecosystems (33 per cent) and biodiversity (17 per cent).

22. As part of the activities of the Greening Education Partnership, a baseline review of the global status of climate change education in the four areas covered by the Partnership has been developed, based on data and evidence compiled by members of the Partnership. In 2023, self-reporting undertaken by 86 countries that are members of the Partnership indicated that 81 per cent of those countries included climate change in their curricula, 88 per cent planned to update their curricula in the coming three years and 90 per cent planned to update their teacher training in the coming three years to strengthen the emphasis on climate change and education for sustainable development. The baseline review was presented, as a common output of its members, at the first annual meeting of the Partnership, held at the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties.

23. In order to capture the transformation in education for sustainable development at the country level, a decision was taken to add a new indicator on greening education to the existing benchmarking framework for Goal 4. Developed by the technical committee on data and monitoring under the SDG 4-Education 2030 High-level Steering Committee, in cooperation with the Education Data and Statistics Commission, thematic indicator 4.7.3 (Extent to which green policy intentions are mainstreamed in curriculum documents)<sup>14</sup> measures the extent to which the three elements of environment/sustainability, climate change and biodiversity are mainstreamed in a curriculum. Countries are encouraged to set national targets for 2025 and 2030.

### **III. Review of the implementation of education for sustainable development**

24. Much progress has been made to promote ecological transition in education, but a more systematic and targeted approach is needed. Education for sustainable development is a key pillar of target 4.7 and of the Recommendation. The Education

<sup>13</sup> See [www.unesco.org/en/articles/climate-change-and-sustainability-science-and-social-science-secondary-school-curricula](http://www.unesco.org/en/articles/climate-change-and-sustainability-science-and-social-science-secondary-school-curricula).

<sup>14</sup> See <https://tgc.uis.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2025/02/EDSC.11.3.4.GCI-Methods.pdf>.

for Sustainable Development for 2030 framework and road map<sup>15</sup> are a reference point for Governments, education stakeholders, civil society and learners of all ages to reorient the goals of learning for the purpose of societal transformation.

## A. Global coordination of Education for Sustainable Development for 2030

25. Education for Sustainable Development for 2030 fosters peer learning and innovation through information, networks and partnerships in five areas: policy, learning environments, educators, youth and communities. To support the implementation of that framework and the road map at the national, regional and global levels, the Education for Sustainable Development for 2030 Global Network was established in October 2022 to promote synergy and encourage cross-sectoral collaboration. To date, more than 100 States members of UNESCO and more than 167 partner organizations have joined the core group of the Network, and more than 18,000 stakeholders around the world have been engaged with.

26. The Network is a global community of practice and a laboratory of ideas for action that provides opportunities for exchange and collaboration among a wide range of stakeholders in education and sustainable development, including government agencies, civil society organizations, educators, young persons, research institutions, United Nations partners, international development communities and business entities, through activities structured around the following objectives: promising practices, knowledge-sharing and mutual learning; global advocacy and policymaking; collaboration and partnerships; and monitoring and evaluation.

27. The Network learning webinar series<sup>16</sup> is organized at the global level and presents tangible and practical activities related to education for sustainable development activities in line with the five priority action areas outlined in the road map, namely advancing policy, transforming learning environments, building capacities of educators, empowering and mobilizing young persons, and accelerating local-level actions. Meetings, workshops and webinars in relation to the Network are being held at the regional level to support States in the development and implementation of country initiatives under the Education for Sustainable Development for 2030 framework and to strengthen partnership and collaboration across the Network.

28. The momentum towards education for sustainable development continues to grow. UNESCO convened the first global meeting of the Network in December 2023 at the United Nations University in Tokyo. In addition, 11 regional meetings and webinars of the Network were held in 2023, feeding into the global event. They were intended to provide an opportunity for States and partners to share progress in their work, particularly in the development of country initiatives. To date, 108 countries are in the process of developing their country initiatives under the Education for Sustainable Development for 2030 framework, including 30 countries that have finalized and successfully launched their initiatives.

29. UNESCO has been promoting opportunities for knowledge exchange and cooperation among education stakeholders and other actors, leading to the emergence of a large community of practice on education for sustainable development that is connected through the communication channels of UNESCO, namely the relevant UNESCO websites and newsletter, the Greening Education Partnership websites and

<sup>15</sup> See <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374802>.

<sup>16</sup> See [www.unesco.org/en/sustainable-development/education/esd-net/webinars](http://www.unesco.org/en/sustainable-development/education/esd-net/webinars).

newsletter, a LinkedIn group on education for sustainable development, and publications and guidance documents on the topic.

30. The UNESCO-Japan Prize on Education for Sustainable Development, established in 2014, is intended to reward institutions or organizations that have developed outstanding, innovative and effective projects in education for sustainable development. The Prize has underscored the critical role of such education as a key enabler of all 17 Goals. The 2023 laureates were: Long Way Home of Guatemala, for its “Hero School”; Kanazawa University of Japan, for its project entitled “Intergenerational learning on education for sustainable development to revitalize remote communities inside Japanese UNESCO Biosphere Reserves and Geopark”; and the Zimbabwe Institute of Permaculture, for its Scope programme. Chosen by an international jury, the initiatives showed outstanding work and dedication in incorporating sustainability into their education systems and engaging with their communities.

31. Each winner received \$50,000 and was invited to join the Network in order to strengthen long-term collaboration with UNESCO. For example, in 2024, the laureates of the 2023 competition were invited to a Network webinar entitled “Halfway to 2030: progress and pathways to education for sustainable development”, to share their activities with stakeholders. In order further to promote the Prize, a brochure and video on the 2023 laureates were created. The call for nominations for the 2025 competition was issued in February 2025. The competition will culminate in an award ceremony in late 2025.

## B. Country initiatives

32. Country initiatives under the Education for Sustainable Development for 2030 framework<sup>17</sup> are intended to mainstream education for sustainable development across the five priority action areas enumerated in the road map. They can be linked with planned or ongoing education sector reform, including the review of policy on curricula and teacher education policy.

33. To date, 109 countries have expressed an interest in developing country initiatives; 45 have submitted a first draft and 30 have successfully launched their initiatives. To illustrate the breadth of the initiatives, a few examples are included below.

34. Saint Kitts and Nevis launched its country initiative in March 2022. Education for sustainable development is considered a national priority in view of the Government’s commitment to achieving the Goals. The Government has put forward a plan towards developing a sustainable island State built on seven pillars. A broad spectrum of activities relevant to education for sustainable development has been implemented under all five priority action areas, across education and non-education sectors.

35. Cabo Verde finalized its country initiative in 2023. The vision consists of driving change and accelerating progress to fulfil the first cycle of the Cabo Verde Ambition 2030 plan. It is driven by the need to address the country’s natural vulnerabilities and improve the quality of education. In line with that approach, and in collaboration with stakeholders, Cabo Verde has started integrating education for sustainable development into the curriculum and offering training for teachers on environmental education and climate change.

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<sup>17</sup> See [www.unesco.org/en/sustainable-development/education/country-initiatives](http://www.unesco.org/en/sustainable-development/education/country-initiatives).

36. Czechia finalized its country initiative in June 2024. Its mission is to apply a new curriculum in which sustainability is indispensable. Czechia has been revising its national curriculum and implementing its long-term education strategy, the broader integration of decarbonization in education and school operations, support for eco-centres and the acceleration of regional collaboration and collaboration among young people.

### C. United Nations inter-agency cooperation and global partnerships

37. United Nations inter-agency cooperation aimed at addressing global sustainability challenges through education for sustainable development has been strengthened through coordination mechanisms dedicated to specific issues, including the One United Nations Climate Change Learning Partnership, the United Nations Alliance on Action for Climate Empowerment, the Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector and the Youth and United Nations Global Alliance.

38. Inter-agency cooperation on greening education has been facilitated through the collaboration forged during the Transforming Education Summit and the launch of the Greening Education Partnership (see paras. 10–16). Eleven United Nations agencies, including the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme, the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNICEF, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, the United Nations University, the World Food Programme and UNESCO, are members of the Partnership. They collaborate regularly in relation to the four priority areas of action under the Partnership. That approach offers an opportunity for closer collaboration among ministries other than those responsible for education, something that is essential for the effective implementation of education for sustainable development.

39. Under the climate-smart education system initiative, and in collaboration with its International Institute for Educational Planning and Save the Children International, UNESCO supports more than 30 countries in mainstreaming climate change adaptation and environmental sustainability into education sector plans, budgets and curricula. The initiative is also aimed at strengthening the capacity of education ministries for cross-sectoral coordination on climate and environment-related policies and programmes. The project has been launched in more than 30 countries.

40. In addition, UNESCO works closely with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research on the Leaders in higher Education Alliance and Programme – For Accelerating Sustainability Transformations (LEAP-FAST) initiative. The programme is intended to create a movement of committed sustainability leaders in higher education to drive deep transformations and help higher education institutions to reach their full potential in contributing to the Goals. The initiative has four components, namely leadership dialogue, the certificate programme, the Goals ambassadors' programme, and regional and national spin-offs. The leadership dialogue brings together directors of higher education institutions. A first dialogue was held at the high-level political forum on sustainable development in New York in July 2024. The first iteration of the 10-week certificate course was launched in March 2025; 19 universities participated. A course platform has been created,<sup>18</sup> and an in-person course session was organized at Majmaah University in Saudi Arabia in April 2025.

<sup>18</sup> For the course platform see <https://highereducation.unsdglearn.org/>.

41. UNESCO collaborated with SDG Champions and the French national commission for UNESCO on the international application project Education4AllSDGs. This platform enables international, national and local policymakers, as well as other education stakeholders around the world, to identify and assess the positive or negative impacts of education policies or projects. It covers teaching and learning, governance, facilities, infrastructure, activities and community partnerships, in relation to the 169 targets of the 2030 Agenda. The application has been developed and is being reviewed and tested by an advisory group before its official launch.

#### **D. Responding to the climate and biodiversity crises**

42. Recent global events, particularly the sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, have placed the spotlight on the key central role of education and learning in the common pursuit of sustainable development. The conceptual basis, socioeconomic implications and environmental and cultural connections of sustainable development make it an enterprise that touches on every aspect of life. It requires far-reaching changes in the way that education is often practised today. Transformative education and learning at all levels and in all settings (formal, non-formal and informal), for people and the planet, are key to addressing interrelated global challenges.

43. The power of education for personal, societal and global transformation can no longer be sidelined in the battle against biodiversity loss and climate change. When people feel connected to nature, they will act. Accordingly, it is essential to promote multi-stakeholder and cross-cooperation between the education, environment and sustainable development sectors.

### **IV. Addressing climate change and biodiversity loss**

#### **A. Climate change**

44. UNESCO promotes climate change education through education for sustainable development. Such education helps learners to understand the causes and consequences of climate change, prepares them to live with its impacts and empowers them to adopt more sustainable lifestyles. The twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change offered an opportunity to convene the first annual meeting of the Greening Education Partnership.

45. At the twenty-eighth session, the work of UNESCO on greening education and education for sustainable development helped to inform the Declaration on the Common Agenda for Education and Climate Change at COP28.<sup>19</sup> In collaboration with the United Arab Emirates, as the President of the Conference, UNESCO ensured that education was prominently highlighted, including through more than 200 sessions at the Greening Education Hub hosted by the Ministry of Education. The Declaration now has 90 endorsements recognizing the central role of education in adapting and mitigating climate change and the need for greater investment to accelerate greening education at the global level. In the context of the Human Development Day, held at the twenty-ninth session, education was included for the first time in the agenda of the presidency of the Conference.

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<sup>19</sup> See [www.unesco.org/en/articles/declaration-common-agenda-education-and-climate-change-cop28?hub=761](http://www.unesco.org/en/articles/declaration-common-agenda-education-and-climate-change-cop28?hub=761).

46. Building on that momentum, the discussion at the twenty-eighth session led to a third series of webinars on the road to the twenty-ninth session, which were jointly organized by UNESCO and the secretariat of the Convention and dedicated to greening teacher training and strengthening the capacities of education systems, something that represents the third priority action area of the Partnership. That final series of webinars, held from May to December 2024, brought together more than 5,000 participants, including policymakers, educators and other key stakeholders.

47. In August 2024, the Presidency Youth Climate Champion for the twenty-ninth session hosted a climate change summer camp in collaboration with Partnership partners, including the secretariat of the Convention, UNESCO, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme, the Foundation for Environmental Education, the Office for Climate Education, Teach For All, the International Renewable Energy Agency and the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. At the camp, training was provided in order for early-career educators (both in-service and pre-service) to integrate climate change education into their teaching. The training session, which was centred on the greening curriculum guidance and green school quality standard, was a four-day event that brought together 75 educators from 35 countries. Testimonials by trained teachers were presented during special event sessions at the twenty-ninth session. They were co-organized by the Action for Climate Empowerment team of the secretariat of the Convention, UNESCO and the Presidency Youth Climate Champion.

48. At the twenty-ninth session, education was, for the first time ever, part of the agenda of the presidency. That outcome was made possible by the holistic Human Development Day, held on 18 November 2024, and the Baku Initiative on Human Development for Climate Resilience. The latter was the first initiative ever adopted by the presidency of the Conference aimed at fostering intersectoral synergies and complementarities among education, health, social protection, skills and jobs, with a special focus on children and young people. The Baku Initiative included a high-level meeting and a joint statement adopted by United Nations agencies, multilateral development banks and multilateral climate funds.<sup>20</sup>

49. The Baku Guiding Principles on Human Development for Climate Resilience were adopted as a set of core principles reflecting the strategic direction and aspirations for human development in the context of climate resilience. The Partnership was identified as a critical platform to realize the ambitions outlined in the Baku Guiding Principles.

50. The ministerial round table on greening education, co-organized by the Greening Education Partnership and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), served as the second annual meeting of the Partnership. The ministerial session provided an opportunity to reaffirm countries' commitments on greening education. Ministers and deputy ministers from eight countries made statements, alongside representatives of UNICEF, the Global Partnership for Education and a teacher representing Education International. At the session, participants discussed accelerating action by including climate literacy in the 2029 Programme for International Student Assessment of OECD. UNESCO will work with OECD towards that goal in accordance with the greening curriculum guidance.

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<sup>20</sup> Those entities consisted of UNESCO, UNICEF, the International Labour Organization, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Development Programme, the Adaptation Fund, the Asian Development Bank, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Green Climate Fund, the Islamic Development Bank, the International Organization for Migration, the Global Fund and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).

## B. Tackling biodiversity loss

51. The intersectoral strategy of UNESCO for biodiversity is based on three pillars: restore the relationship between humans and nature and regenerate ecosystems; conserve the harmony of ecosystems; and amplify the power of young persons. With its multidisciplinary mandate encompassing education and public awareness of biodiversity and sustainable development, UNESCO emphasizes links between cultural diversity and biodiversity and between societal aspects and ethical issues.

52. Education is essential for the sustainable and equitable use of biodiversity and its conservation, in particular for understanding the essence of biodiversity and its impact on lives and the sustainability of the planet. Education also helps people to learn to respect nature and understand perspectives, including promoting local and Indigenous knowledge of biodiversity. Addressing biodiversity through education is a multidisciplinary challenge; it cuts across all sectors of society. The solutions to those issues will be dependent on building strong partnerships.

53. UNESCO actively supports education on biodiversity. As lead United Nations agency for biodiversity education, it is dedicated to promoting an awareness and understanding of biodiversity and strengthening biodiversity education and learning, particularly in the areas of training teachers and educators, developing learning materials and empowering youth. UNESCO works to promote not only knowledge but also skills, values, attitudes and behaviours in relation to biodiversity.

54. There is a need to focus on stewardship and values to guide individuals towards greater solidarity, intergenerational responsibility and respect for nature and humanity. It is therefore vital to integrate biodiversity into education and learning programmes. The education for sustainable development approach is not just about knowledge; it is about learning to act. That process calls for a transformative education, one that nurtures among learners from the youngest age an awareness of human interdependence with nature and encourages action to protect it.

55. Drawing on its capacity for mobilizing multidisciplinary expertise, UNESCO works through its unique network of designated sites, which act as learning hubs for sustainability to develop the training of teachers and educators, the development of learning materials and youth empowerment. This innovative approach brings together partners to integrate interdisciplinary approaches to scientific and environmental education, promote lifelong learning and inclusive quality education systems and develop practical learning activities focused on environmental and climate change action.

56. Through a whole-institution approach to education for sustainable development, UNESCO mobilizes teachers, students and communities around these sites, fostering collaboration and sustainable practices and inspiring connection, curiosity, cooperation and a better understanding of humans' relationship with nature. It thus promotes the sites as education for sustainable development learning hubs aimed at encouraging sustainability and climate action.<sup>21</sup> Through this programme, UNESCO puts forward interdisciplinary approaches to scientific and environmental education, promotes lifelong learning and inclusive quality education systems, and develops practical learning activities focused on environmental and climate change action.

57. At the twenty-sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Cali, Colombia, UNESCO worked with the Commission on Education and Communication of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the secretariat of the Convention and other partners to

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<sup>21</sup> See [www.unesco.org/en/sustainable-development/education/sites](http://www.unesco.org/en/sustainable-development/education/sites).

organize a full education day,<sup>22</sup> as a parallel event, in order to focus discussions on the topic “Building momentum for a global plan of action on education for biodiversity”. The event brought together global experts and practitioners to clarify goals, activities, timelines, resource requirements and potential partners to advance biodiversity education and highlight its critical importance for implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. More than 40 intergenerational, cross-cultural speakers and moderators from organizations worldwide, and approximately 300 participants, took part. The event also brought together government representatives to showcase how their countries had included education and collaboration with education systems in national biodiversity strategies and action plans.<sup>23</sup> The day ended with a panel discussion on international children and young persons, at which the Global Child Biodiversity Declaration was announced.<sup>24</sup> In the Declaration, six key areas of work are identified: government policies, school curricula, Indigenous perspectives, community engagement, solutions for funding and awareness campaigns.

58. The decisions adopted at the meeting include one on communication, education and public awareness (decision 16/10). The Conference of the Parties invited UNESCO, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and the Global Youth Biodiversity Network<sup>25</sup> to collaborate to develop a global plan of action for education on biodiversity, encompassing formal and informal education, to support the transformative actions needed to implement the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. The Conference also proposed new ways to compile and disseminate information on Indigenous and traditional knowledge systems and their impact on global biodiversity.

59. In follow-up to the Education Day, an information note<sup>26</sup> entitled “Building momentum for a global plan of action on education for biodiversity” was prepared by the Commission on Education and Communication, UNESCO, the World Wide Fund for Nature and members of the International Union for Conservation of Nature task force on nature-based education. The note is intended to inform negotiators about the importance of developing a global plan of action for education on biodiversity.

60. In the context of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, and under the leadership of the Foundation for Environmental Education, the North American Association for Environmental Education and UNESCO, Education Challenge 6.1<sup>27</sup> is aimed at embedding ecosystem restoration education into education systems around the world by 2030. It requires a collective effort by Governments, educators, students and communities. By doing so, society can create a future in which every individual has the knowledge and skills to protect and restore the planet’s ecosystems, ensuring a healthy and sustainable future for generations to come.

61. Together with UNESCO and the North American Association for Environmental Education, the Foundation for Environmental Education has drafted a framework<sup>28</sup> setting out what effective ecosystem restoration education could look like. It includes the following key concepts and the corresponding learning objectives: ecosystems support all life on Earth (interconnectedness); biodiversity and resilience; human-

<sup>22</sup> See [www.cbd.int/conferences/2024/parallel-meetings/kmgbf-pavilion-education-day](http://www.cbd.int/conferences/2024/parallel-meetings/kmgbf-pavilion-education-day).

<sup>23</sup> See <https://ort.cbd.int/nbsaps>.

<sup>24</sup> See <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YDFiGLUTw47qiLY8qjA-RoBOguCmVoQs/view>.

<sup>25</sup> See [www.gybn.org/](http://www.gybn.org/).

<sup>26</sup> See <https://iucn.org/resources/other-brief/information-note-building-momentum-global-plan-action-education-biodiversity>.

<sup>27</sup> See [www.leaf.global/un-decade-education-challenge](http://www.leaf.global/un-decade-education-challenge).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

ecosystem relationships; restoration as a response to degradation; and community engagement and stewardship for long-term sustainability.

62. The findings of a survey launched by UNESCO to assess awareness and implementation of ecosystem restoration education in primary, secondary and higher education showed that 85 per cent of teachers felt confident teaching ecosystem restoration. Educators who responded to the survey most commonly teach about forests (21 per cent), followed by freshwater (16 per cent); peatlands are the subject least commonly taught. Outdoor learning and site visits are the most commonly used approaches when teaching about ecosystem restoration (26 and 22 per cent, respectively). Almost half of educators use those types of on-the-ground, interactive pedagogical tools to enhance ecosystem restoration education.

63. Games, site visits and guest speakers are often cited as resources or materials used by teachers to integrate ecosystem restoration into their educational programmes. Audiovisual and digital tools, such as videos, websites and other publications, were also mentioned. Another element frequently mentioned was the use of practical projects involving local communities and case-study-based learning methods.

64. The Education for Sustainable Development for 2030 framework emphasizes integrating ocean education into curricula, teacher training and learning environments, as well as into non-formal education and into efforts to promote solutions at the local level and empower youth and citizens. By leveraging such networks as Education for Sustainable Development for 2030 and the Greening Education Partnership, society can encourage local solutions and empower local young persons and communities to act. With its ocean literacy initiative, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO is committed to creating an ocean-literate society able to make informed and responsible decisions on ocean resources and ocean sustainability. In particular, the UNESCO Ocean Literacy Portal<sup>29</sup> serves as a global one-stop shop, providing resources and content to all, with the goal of creating an ocean-literate society able to make informed and responsible decisions on ocean resources and ocean sustainability.

65. Ocean literacy is crucial to meeting the challenges of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, particularly Challenge 10 (Restoring society's relationship with the ocean).<sup>30</sup> In order to ensure a deeper understanding of the ocean's connections to global challenges from climate change to food security, human health and economic stability, and to inspire collective action to safeguard the ocean, ocean literacy fosters collaborative efforts on a global scale to contribute to the co-design and co-delivery of solutions to the problems faced by the marine ecosystem and promotes a common understanding of those issues.

66. At the first Ocean Literacy World Conference,<sup>31</sup> held in Venice, Italy, on 7 and 8 June 2024, participants endorsed the Venice Declaration for Ocean Literacy in Action.<sup>32</sup> The Declaration calls upon Governments to develop a "solid and adaptable Ocean Literacy framework" for both formal and non-formal educational systems, engaging with all stakeholders, from students to educators and policymakers. The Declaration is a statement of intent for the ocean literacy community as it seeks to contribute to the discussions of the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, held in Nice,

<sup>29</sup> See <https://oceanliteracy.unesco.org/>.

<sup>30</sup> See <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000390126.locale=en>.

<sup>31</sup> See [www.ioc.unesco.org/en/articles/ocean-literacy-world-conference-0](http://www.ioc.unesco.org/en/articles/ocean-literacy-world-conference-0).

<sup>32</sup> See <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000390297.locale=en>.

France, in June 2025, and more generally to engage with society in order to regenerate the most valuable ecosystem on Earth.

## V. Conclusion

67. Given the immediacy of global warming, climate change and environmental degradation, these challenges have increasingly been prioritized as part of the education for sustainable development movement. This means that the entire ecosystem of learning (teaching, systems, spaces and so on) needs to be “greened” or adapted for climate mitigation and resilience. “Greening” education is a specific component of education for sustainable development and is consistent with the competency-based, whole-institution approach. It is based on the argument that preparing learners to act and be prepared for climate change means going beyond simply increasing their knowledge about climate change. Education is essential for sustainable development because it is the best way to build green societies.

68. Society cannot focus solely on building green economies; society needs green citizens. Through education, individuals must craft new ways of seeing the world, new ways of thinking about their responsibilities to one another and the planet, and new ways of acting as global citizens.

69. The youngest generations must be equipped with the skills necessary for more inclusive societies – skills that actively empower the marginalized and voiceless and respond to everyone’s needs across classes and identities.

70. There is a need to focus on stewardship and active citizenship to guide individuals towards solidarity, intergenerational responsibility and respect for nature and humanity. Through education for sustainable development, society should promote the guiding principles for transformative education included in the Recommendation, which acknowledges that education in all its forms and dimensions, in and out of schools, shapes how individuals see the world and treat others, and can and should be a pathway to constructing lasting peace. There is also a need to promote the principles of the Earth Charter,<sup>33</sup> which defines sustainability as environmental practices that value and sustain biodiversity and life-supporting ecological processes, and the ideals of the Declaration on the Responsibilities of the Present Generations towards Future Generations.<sup>34</sup>

71. Education for sustainable development equips and empowers learners of all ages with the knowledge, skills, values and agency to take informed decisions and responsible action for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society. It enhances the cognitive, socioemotional and behavioural dimensions of learning. It is holistic and transformational and encompasses learning content and outcomes, pedagogy and the learning environment itself.

72. It is widely acknowledged that a stronger commitment on the part of Governments and other stakeholders is needed in order to support the further scaling-up of education and learning in efforts to combat climate change. This process must start with a strong commitment to include education for sustainable development in relevant policies. Such action implies ensuring that curricula, schools and formal and informal learning environments are consistent with the natural, political, economic and cultural contexts and needs of the country in question.

<sup>33</sup> See <https://earthcharter.org/library/the-earth-charter-text/>.

<sup>34</sup> See <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000110827>.

73. In order to address the polycrisis and the current complex challenges, education must go beyond preparation for a job and become a catalyst for systemic transformation – a way to shift how people think, act and relate to one another and ensure that the approach is consistent with living systems and the principles of education.

74. The time has come to move from standardized education systems to dynamic learning ecosystems that support, encourage and value the following principles:

- (a) Learner-centred co-learning and co-creation: moving from passive content absorption to active exploration, discovery and sense-making;
- (b) Educators as activators and enablers of learning: teachers and educators must be empowered as facilitators, helping learners to navigate complexity and uncertainty with curiosity and creativity;
- (c) Learning to relate and connect: education must help people to develop the skills to relate to themselves, one another and nature, fostering empathy, collaboration and ecological intelligence;
- (d) Nature as key for education: nature is not just a subject; it is a teacher, a learning environment and a source of inspiration. Learning about, in, with, from and as nature is key to understanding humans' role in regenerative systems and planetary health.

75. The interconnected crises, such as climate change, biodiversity loss and economic instability, impede the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals. Addressing those crises requires further integrating education for sustainable development into sustainability efforts, as a healthy planet is critical to human well-being, biodiversity and climate stability.

76. Environmental and climate action should thus be promoted and better integrated as a core curriculum component throughout the learning cycle, at all levels of education and in teacher training. That commitment is at the heart of the action taken by UNESCO to ensure that everyone can learn to take care of one another and the planet.