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**DRAFT UNECE STRATEGY FOR EDUCATION
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Addendum

BACKGROUND

1. The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, in 1972, recommended that the Secretary-General, the organizations of the United Nations system and the other international agencies concerned should, after consultation and agreement, take the necessary steps to establish an international programme in environmental education, interdisciplinary in approach, in school and out of school, encompassing all levels of education and directed towards the general public, in particular the ordinary citizen living in rural and urban areas, youth and adult alike, with a view to educating him as to the simple steps he might take, within his means, to manage and control his environment.

2. In 1975, participants of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) environmental education workshop in Belgrade proposed a global framework for environmental education, referred to as the Belgrade Charter. It states that the goal of environmental education is to develop a world population that is aware of, and concerned about, the environment and its associated problems, and has the knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivations and commitment to work individually and to collectively solve current problems and prevent new ones.

3. Two years after the workshop in Belgrade, UNESCO held an environmental education conference in Tbilisi. The Tbilisi Declaration built upon the Belgrade Charter and produced the following goals for environmental education: (a) to foster clear awareness of, and concern about, economic, social, political and ecological interdependence in urban and rural areas; (b) to provide every person with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, values, attitudes, commitment

and skills needed to protect and improve the environment; and (c) to create new patterns of behaviour of individuals, groups and society as a whole towards the environment. The Declaration also identified five categories of objectives for individuals and groups that should be acquired through environmental education: (a) awareness and sensitivity to the environment and environmental problems; (b) knowledge and understanding of the environment and environmental problems; (c) attitudes of concern for the environment; (d) skills to identify and solve environmental problems; and (e) participation for active involvement in solving environmental problems.

4. In 1990 at the World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand), basic learning were defined as comprising both essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem solving) and the basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values and attitudes) required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions and to continue learning (World Declaration on Education for All, art. 1, para. 1). The Dakar Framework for Action (World Education Forum, Dakar, April 2000) also confirms that education is a fundamental human right. It is the key to sustainable development and peace and stability within and among countries, and thus an indispensable means for effective participation in the societies and economies of the 21st century, which are affected by rapid globalization.

5. The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21: Programme of Action for Sustainable Development were adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, Brasil. In chapter 36 of Agenda 21, it is emphasized that education, including formal education, public awareness and training should be recognized as a process by which human beings and societies can reach their fullest potential. Education is critical for promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of the people to address environment and development issues. At all United Nations conferences thereafter, regardless of the subject under consideration (environment, population, social development, human rights and democracy, women, and habitat), sustainable development has been a common concern and there has also been a consensus that education is a driving force for the change needed. It has been pointed out that peace, development, health and democracy are mutually reinforcing prerequisites for sustainable development.

6. Education for sustainable development is the result of the 1992 United Nations Conference in Rio. One problem with environmental education before 1992 was that the environment had become a very broad subject encompassing many independent sciences, including economic, natural and social sciences. This had made the subject of the environment difficult to treat and educators felt at a loss when faced with such a complex subject. Then the Rio Conference advised that the environment should be expanded to sustainable development. The definition of Education for Sustainable Development reflects the parent term – sustainable development.

7. In 1992, the World Congress for Education and Communication on Environment and Development was held in Toronto, Canada. It was the first major international gathering, after the Rio Conference, to focus on chapter 36 of Agenda 21, promoting education, public awareness and training. Development was viewed from a growth perspective, where nature is

capital to be managed by reducing, in particular, the impact of levying activities on the environment. In this context sustainable development is viewed as a compromise, where too great a turnabout of the predominant order of things can be avoided. Education must meet the needs of sustainable development by training human resources to optimize productivity by encouraging technical progress and by promoting cultural conditions conducive to social and economic change. The objective is to make the use of all forms of capital (including human capital) to achieve rapid, more equitable economic growth while reducing impacts on the environment.

8. Following a recommendation made in Agenda 21, the United Nations established the Commission on Sustainable Development in 1993 to ensure that Agenda 21 is effectively implemented. The Commission is a functional commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council. It systematically deals with individual Agenda 21 topics at annual conferences. It adopted wide-ranging resolutions on education and communication at its sixth session in 1998. It also approved an extensive work programme that calls upon governments to incorporate sustainable development objectives into curricula at all levels of education and supports their resolve in this connection.

9. In the report “Learning: the treasure within”, which was addressed to UNESCO in 1996 by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, the need for education for a democratic and sustained future is underpinned. It sets out four pillars as the foundation for education: learning to live together, learning to know, learning to do and learning to be.

10. The International Conference on Environment and Society: Education and Public Awareness for Sustainability (Thessaloniki, Greece, 1997) stated that a curriculum reoriented towards sustainability would place the notion of citizenship among its primary objectives. The traditional primacy of nature study needed to be balanced by the study of social sciences and humanities. Learning about the interactions of ecological processes would then be associated with market forces, cultural values, equitable decision-making, government action and the environmental impact of human activities in a holistic interdependent manner. Students needed to learn how to reflect critically on their place in the world and to consider what sustainability means to them and their communities. They needed to practise envisioning alternative ways of development and living, evaluating alternative visions, learning how to negotiate and justify choices between visions, and making plans for achieving these, as well as participating in community life to bring such visions into effect. These were the skills and abilities which underlay good citizenship, and made education for sustainability part of a process of building an informed, concerned and active population. The Conference concluded that in this way education for sustainability contributed to education for democracy and peace.

11. Since 1992, an international consensus has emerged that achieving sustainable development is essentially a process of learning. At major United Nations conferences of the 1990s, including those on human rights in Vienna (1993), population and development in Cairo (1994), small island developing States in Barbados (1994), social development in Copenhagen (1995), women in Beijing (1995), food security in Rome (1996) and human settlements in Istanbul, Turkey (1996), the critical role of education was stressed.

12. According to the report “Education for Sustainability From Rio to Johannesburg: Lessons learnt from a decade of commitment” (UNESCO, 2002), some of the key lessons that have been learnt about education for sustainable development (ESD) over this decade are: (a) ESD is an emerging but dynamic concept that encompasses a new vision of education that seeks to empower people of all ages to assume responsibility for creating a sustainable future; (b) basic education provides the foundation for all future education and is a contribution to SD in its own right; (c) there is a need to refocus many existing education policies, programmes and practices so that they build the concepts, skills, motivation and commitment needed for SD; (d) education is the key to rural transformation and is essential to ensuring the economic, cultural and ecological vitality of rural areas and communities; (e) lifelong learning, including adult and community education, appropriate technical and vocational education, higher education and teacher education are all vital ingredients of capacity-building for sustainable future.

13. Within the United Nations system of organizations, UNESCO is the lead agency, but other organizations also carry out relevant activities. These include the United Nations Division for Sustainable Development, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). UNESCO has also developed partnerships with many United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) to promote population education, WHO to develop new approaches to health education, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to advance education in rural areas and promote food security, WHO and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) to combat the pandemic, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and major NGOs to assist in the reconstruction of education in crisis and post-conflict situations, and many more. In addition, the European Union, the Council of Europe, the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development have also contributed to an understanding and implementation of environmental education and education for sustainable development.

14. There are number of subregional intergovernmental processes, including Agenda 21 for education for sustainable development in the Baltic Sea region; the Working Group on Environmental Education of the Inter-State Environmental Council of the Newly Independent States; the Central Asian Inter-State Working Group on environmental education and the North American Association for Environmental Education.

15. A number of networks, educational centres and associations of universities and NGOs have started work on the development of multidisciplinary forms of education to devise solutions to the problems linked to sustainable development. Among these initiatives are the 1988 Magna Charta Universitatum Europaeum, the 1999 Bologna Declaration, the 1993 Copernicus University Charter for Sustainable Development and the 2000 Earth Charter.

16. The UNECE Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters opens up a new dimension for environmental education. Citizens should gain a better understanding of links between environmental, social and economic concerns. They should learn to implement in practice their rights of access to information and justice, and of participation in decision-making. Active

involvement of major groups, including environmental civil society organizations, consumer groups and youth, is widely considered to be indispensable for making environmental policies more effective and legitimate.

17. The Regional Ministerial Meeting for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Geneva, 24-25 September 2001) considered the subject and called for initiatives in education. Specifically, the Ministers agreed to improve education systems and the design of learning programmes on sustainable development to increase the general understanding of how to implement and promote sustainable development in practice.

18. The Declaration and the Plan of Implementation of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, underpinned the need to integrate SD into education systems at all levels to promote education as a key agent for change. The Summit also recommended that the United Nations General Assembly should adopt a decade of education for sustainable development starting in 2005.

19. During the preparations for the fifth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (Kiev, 2003), considerable interest was shown, both by governments and non-governmental organizations, in improving environmental education (EE) and education for sustainable development. UNECE Environment Ministers recognized that education was a fundamental tool for environmental protection and sustainable development and that environmental education had increasingly addressed a wide range of issues included in Agenda 21 and they endorsed the Statement on Education for Sustainable Development.

20. They invited all countries to integrate sustainable development into their education systems at all levels from pre-school to higher education and in non-formal as well as informal education, in order to promote education as a key agent for change. They welcomed the proclamation by the United Nations General Assembly, at its fifty-seventh session (December 2002), of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development starting in 2005, as recommended by the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and agreed to take the lead in promoting it regionally.

21. To this end, they invited UNECE to work, in accordance with its mandate, with UNESCO and the Council of Europe on a regional strategy for education for sustainable development, in a dialogue with all relevant international actors, including NGOs and major groups contributing to the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development led by UNESCO.

22. Thus, the strategy should benefit from experience gained both within the region and globally and will be derived from the Statement on Education for Sustainable Development and the Basic elements for a UNECE strategy for education for sustainable development submitted at the fifth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe”. It is also a contribution to and in line with the Framework for a draft implementation scheme for the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development developed by UNESCO and should be used as a foundation for the regional implementation of the Decade.