

NEW ERA 21

The Commitment for Education Re-Affirmation for the 21st Century

Add your name to strengthen our appeal to the Governments, International Organisations, Social Partners and all Major Groups that will meet during the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development WSSD.

Appeal

The Educational community, worldwide, greets with hope all efforts of the World Leaders meeting in Johannesburg to ensure Sustainable Development on Earth at the outset of the 21st century and the 3^d millennium.

The purpose of the present appeal is to call upon Governments and all major Decision Makers to Re-Affirm their commitment to Education, which should be considered as the prerequisite for any attempt to alleviate poverty, make livelihoods decent and approach Sustainable Development.

In the mind of most of us who sign this plea, reaffirmation of already agreed commitments to reach unmet targets cannot be considered as real progress. However, as educators working in the real world, we are realists and we strive for substantial improvements in practice, not only in theory. Therefore, re-affirmation and concretisation of commitments is frequently more useful than a single enthusiastic statement.

Governments recognized the critical importance of Education for promoting Sustainable Development already in Rio and in Agenda 21, Chapter 36. During the International Conference of Thessaloniki (1997) it was concluded that in order to successfully establish the three pillars of Sustainability (Environment, Economy, Society) all available tools should be employed including: regulation/legislation and strengthening of institutions; economic instruments and incentives etc.; and technological/scientific information. The solid foundation for all the above is undoubtedly Education.

We herewith basically refer to two aspects of Education, as cited also in various documents and declarations: ⁽¹⁾

- "Education for All" (EFA), which according to the Dakar Framework for Action and the Millennium Declaration concerns primary schooling for all children everywhere, boys and girls alike.

- "Education for Environment and Sustainability" or "Education for Sustainable Development" (*EfES* or *ESD*), which according to article 36 of Agenda 21 and the Thessaloniki Declaration should be strengthened and included directly and indirectly, in school curricula and at all levels of formal, non-formal and informal education.

In this way, appropriately tuned Education for Environment and Sustainable Development emerges as a crucial political instrument that facilitates economic development, reinforces social values and social cohesion and ensures integrity of the natural environment and of biodiversity.

The ultimate goal is to achieve peaceful coexistence among peoples, with less suffering, less hunger, less poverty in a world where people will be able to practice their rights as human beings and citizens in a dignified way. At the same time, the natural environment will be facilitated to play its regenerating role by avoiding biodiversity loss and waste accumulation in the biosphere and the geosphere. Richness in diversity in all sectors of the natural, cultural and social environment is a basic component for a stable ecosystem and for the safety and resilience of every community.

These ideas are not new. Actually they have been stated, recycled and elaborated further by many thinkers, politicians and educators in order to become accepted as a common ground for more and more individuals, groups and communities with multiple backgrounds throughout the world. This expanding "ownership" of ideas, concepts and expressions by people of different origins, who, while "sharing" also keep their distinctive identities, is the key element to continuity and progress secured by education.

This process, in the course of history, allowed for progress by channelling the transfer and successive change of the role of pioneers and forerunners from one group to another, from one nation to the other, and from one civilization or culture to another.

In the context of Sustainability, *vis a vis* the 21st century, Education is called upon to perform an additional task: To provide a safety valve for the future of mankind, in a period when uniformity and interrelated communication systems are the main expressions, tools and symptoms of globalisation. Our planet is shrinking; the intrusion of particular models and the selection of learning themes reflects a cognitive as well as cultural approach, which seems to be alarmingly linear and uniform, thus vulnerable, just like all natural products deriving from intensive monocultures.

[1] Agenda 21 (1992), Declaration of Thessaloniki (1997), Dakar Framework for Action (2000), Millennium Declaration (2000).

We, the formal, non-formal and informal educators who sign this appeal to Governments, International Organisations, Social Partners and all Major Groups that will meet during the Johannesburg WSSD in August-September 2002, CALL UPON them:

1. To recognize and re-affirm the vital role of Education in building Sustainable Development and thus place it at the top of their priorities as a political and developmental goal to facilitate and support all other efforts.
2. Such Education should aim at Peace and Justice and should respect and encourage cultural diversity and differentiations in learning subjects and methodologies.
3. To re-affirm their commitment ⁽²⁾ to:
 - Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education for urban and rural communities.
 - Ensure that by 2015 all children everywhere, boys and girls alike are able to complete a full course of primary schooling of good quality while girls and boys will have equal access to all levels of education.
 - Achieve a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women.
4. To re-affirm their commitment ⁽³⁾ to ensure that appropriate education for Environment and Sustainable Development (*EfES* or *ESD*) is included and integrated at all levels. This implies:
 - reorienting formal education towards sustainable development.
 - increasing public awareness on the problems, their roots and suitable ways to address them.
 - promoting appropriate training.
 - supporting the work of relevant NGOs and other groups who act as informal educators at various levels.
5. To act accordingly so as to provide for the means (institutional frameworks and financial resources). Therefore, to allocate at least 5% of GNP for Education, by the year 2007. ⁽⁴⁾
6. To review the progress obtained by all stakeholders and report on the follow-up of these commitments in a major international conference on Education to be organised before 2007. ⁽⁴⁾

[2] Deriving from the UNESCO-Dakar Framework for Action and the Millennium Declaration

[3] Deriving from the principles of Chapter 36 of Agenda 21 and the Thessaloniki Declaration

[4] e.g. Stockholm + 35, Rio + 15, Johannesburg + 5, Tbilisi + 30, Thessaloniki + 10

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The following information is for evaluation reasons only and will not be used for any other purpose. Please use capital latin characters.

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sign this appeal to the Governments, International Organisations, Social
Partners and all Major Groups that will meet during the Johannesburg
WSSD and **call for Education Re-Affirmation** to approach Sustainable
Development.
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