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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Committee on Environmental Policy

#### United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development

##### Fourteenth meeting

Geneva, 2 and 3 May 2019

## Report of the Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development on its fourteenth meeting

### I. Introduction

1. The fourteenth meeting of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development was held on 2 and 3 May 2019 in Geneva.

#### A. Attendance

2. Delegations from 27 ECE member States attended the meeting: Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Malta, Netherlands, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

3. From the United Nations system, a representative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) participated.

4. A representative of the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia also participated in the meeting.

5. In addition, representatives of the following non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and educational institutions attended the meeting: the Cyprus Energy Agency; the Regional Centre of Expertise "Ecodemia" (Belarus); We want to be at home (Switzerland); Education for Sustainable Development (Ukraine); Ecological Future (Ukraine); Planet'ERE (France); Soka Gakkai International (Switzerland); Global Education Network Europe (Portugal); Journalists for Human Rights (North Macedonia); NGO Support Centre (Cyprus); the Sustainable Development Investment Finance Partnership (United States of America); Youth Sexual Awareness for Europe – International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network (Belgium); the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (Greece); and the International University of La Rioja (Spain).



## **B. Adoption of the agenda**

6. The Steering Committee adopted the agenda for its fourteenth meeting as set out in document ECE/CEP/AC.13/2019/1.

## **II. Implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development**

### **A. Preliminary results on progress achieved and challenges encountered in the fourth phase of implementation**

7. The Chair recalled that the member States had agreed to undertake a regular assessment of the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (CEP/AC.13/2005/3/Rev.1) based on the unified reporting format and a clear set of indicators, as developed by the ECE Expert Group on Indicators for Education for Sustainable Development. The first three national implementation reporting cycles had been carried out in 2007, 2010 and 2014. National implementation reporting allowed for stock to be taken and main successes and challenges to be identified. Moreover, such reporting offered a unique opportunity for countries to learn from each other regarding the implementation of education for sustainable development, as it provided in-depth information about experiences and challenges encountered region-wide.

8. The fourth mandatory reporting cycle had been carried out in 2018 by the end of the fourth phase of implementation (2017–2019) of the Strategy. The original deadline for the submission of national implementation reports of 1 November 2018 had been extended to mid-June 2019 following requests for more time from a number of member States. Consequently, it had not been possible to finalize the fourth progress report in time for the fourteenth meeting. The report would be made available for the fifteenth meeting of the Steering Committee, which would take place in May 2020.

9. The Chair recalled that development of the fourth progress report, which was still being completed, had been made possible thanks to the Government of Cyprus, which had supplied three staff members from the Pedagogical Team of the Unit for Education for Environment and Sustainable Development, Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, to write the progress report together with the ECE secretariat.

10. A representative of the delegation of Cyprus presented the preliminary findings of the report. The report reviewed the data collected through national implementation reports submitted by member States at the end of the fourth phase of implementation and included analysis of reports from 24 countries. Some reports had not been included in the analysis due to their late submission, other reports had been submitted only in Russian, while other countries had promised to submit their reports after the meeting, before the last deadline as indicated.

11. The Chair drew attention to the following key findings of the report:

(a) There were policies in place to support education for sustainable development in various countries. The challenge was to coordinate those policies and to increase the number of countries with national implementation plans for education for sustainable development;

(b) Policies had been expanded to the non-formal and informal levels and, in most countries, they encouraged synergies and involved various stakeholders in education for sustainable development;

(c) Most countries addressed key sustainable development-related themes and had strategies to implement education for sustainable development in formal and non-formal education;

(d) The whole institution approach needed to be re-examined and further implemented in the context of some countries, mainly in relation to incentives and policies;

(e) In almost all countries, educators had reported having received training on education for sustainable development competencies during pre- and in-service training. A considerable number of countries did not have an established network promoting cooperation on education for sustainable development at the national level;

(f) Tools and materials for education for sustainable development were widely produced through the encouragement of national strategies and investment of public money. What was lacking was the establishment of quality control criteria. Moreover, much needed to be done in terms of dissemination and accessibility of materials;

(g) Many government departments/units responsible for education for sustainable development acknowledged the importance of research and development and recognized the need to connect research to education for sustainable development policy and practice. In terms of promotion of research and development, the weakest element was the evaluation of the Strategy's outcomes;

(h) In a limited number of countries, knowledge of indigenous peoples and traditional knowledge on education for sustainable development was viewed in a holistic way and extended to indigenous languages, traditional lifestyles, folk art, dancing and nature. Particular emphasis was placed on recognizing indigenous components across the curriculum;

(i) Countries reported challenges in carrying out national implementation plans on education for sustainable development, mainly referring to financial and time constraints, the need to disseminate good practices and experience and the establishment of synergies.

12. The secretariat expressed appreciation to those countries that had submitted national implementation reports and thanked the Government of Cyprus for its in-kind contribution to the preparation of the synthesis report.

13. The secretariat informed the Committee that the progress report would be finalized after the additional and final deadline of mid-June 2019, given to those countries which had not yet submitted their national implementation reports. Once completed, the report would be finalized and circulated to the Steering Committee for information and further submission as an official document for the consideration of the Steering Committee at its fifteenth meeting.

14. The Chair opened the floor for interventions on outstanding activities and initiatives implemented since the thirteenth meeting of the Steering Committee (Geneva, 3 and 4 May 2018). In the discussion that ensued, a number of countries presented relevant activities or provided information that had not been included in their country reports. The Steering Committee asked the secretariat to upload on the website all interventions provided to the secretariat and to take note of the good practices reported.

## **B. Regional framework of cooperation for sustainable development: Regional Forum on Sustainable Development**

15. The secretariat informed the Committee about the outcomes of the peer learning round table “The Power of Knowledge for Change: Education and Learning as Drivers of Sustainable Development”, organized in the framework of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Region (Geneva, 21 and 22 March 2019).

16. The Committee took note of the information provided and highlighted the involvement of the Steering Committee and its members in the round table, which had provided an opportunity to highlight the potential role of the Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development in supporting countries' efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 4 and its target 4.7 related to education for sustainable development, by sharing good practices and encouraging their adoption by other countries.

17. The secretariat encouraged the Steering Committee to participate in the next series of regional forums with similar organizational patterns, should the proposed format allow for presentation of good practice case studies.

### **C. Outcomes of capacity-building activities**

18. The secretariat updated participants on a Swiss-funded capacity-building workshop on the promotion of education for sustainable development at the national level (Tbilisi, 5 and 6 April 2019).

19. A representative of Georgia presented the outcomes of the workshop, which had focused on priority action area (c) of the framework for implementation of the Strategy (Strengthening technical and vocational education and training in support of sustainable development and the transition to a green economy). The purpose of the workshop had been to discuss mechanisms for integrating the main principles of education for sustainable development into the national vocational education and training system by organizing a cross-sectoral dialogue between key stakeholders. The aim of that dialogue had been to look for opportunities to reorient the vocational education and training system towards: promotion of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals; and the development of relevant education for sustainable development competencies of educators to ensure their active engagement in that field, given that the absence of such competencies had been identified as a major obstacle to progress in that regard.

20. The Chair thanked the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation for funding the workshop and welcomed the information that funding for the next capacity-building workshop was available for the year 2020.

21. The secretariat underlined the importance of conducting capacity-building activities in the framework of the implementation of the Strategy at the national level and invited member States to contribute further to capacity-building activities.

22. The Committee asked the secretariat to continue cooperation with interested member States, including in order to identify countries interested in hosting the workshop in 2020. It was agreed that the decision regarding the final choice of host country for the next workshop in 2020 would be made by the secretariat in consultation with the Government of Switzerland and the Bureau and communicated to the interested countries in due course after the meeting.

## **III. Education for sustainable development for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through the engagement of youth**

23. The Committee was invited to discuss how youth could be engaged in advancing the education for sustainable development agenda and particularly in ECE processes, and the challenges that must be taken into account regarding youth engagement in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Young people's vision and energy could be the force that dynamically drove the rest of society to adopt new sustainable lifestyles and provide innovative solutions and alternatives for sustainable development. By investing in youth, society invested in its future. Education for sustainable development, as a transformational process, had a central role in educating, inspiring and motivating young people to take actions for more resilient and sustainable communities.

24. The Chair of the Steering Committee introduced the issue and made an extended presentation on the item. She gave examples of existing policy documents and/or official statements of a number of international organizations that referred to youth, such as the *UNESCO Road Map for Implementing the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development*<sup>1</sup> and the UNESCO position paper on the future of education for

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Paris, 2014).

sustainable development,<sup>2</sup> which highlighted the need to support youth in their role as change agents for sustainable development through education for sustainable development and to provide opportunities for young people's engagement in key decision-making processes concerning sustainable development. The Strategy – adopted in 2005 (CEP/AC.13/2005/2) – referred to the need to ensure that pupils and students in formal education acquired appropriate knowledge of sustainable development and were aware of the impact of decisions that did not support sustainable development (CEP/AC.13/2005/3/Rev.1, para. 29). Similarly, the workplan for the Strategy for the period 2017–2019 included a direct but limited reference to youth in terms of considering the role of education for sustainable development networks, including those of youth, as a vital part of the implementation framework (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2018/3, para. 15 (f) (i)).

25. The Committee was currently in a transitional phase in which the new mission, objectives and framework for the implementation of the Strategy were being set, together with the plan of work for the new post-2019 implementation period. Consequently, it was necessary to consider the issue of the role of youth in the process. That issue had been touched upon during the discussion of experts at the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Group for Strategic Planning, held on 27 and 28 November 2018 in the Hague, the Netherlands, with the purpose of discussing current challenges and future priorities for the Committee's work and formulating strategic proposals for the further promotion of education for sustainable development in the region until 2030. At that meeting, among other things, the experts had discussed ideas and put forward proposals on the role of youth that had consequently been included in a draft concept note developed as an outcome of the Ad Hoc Group's work under strand 4: Entrepreneurship, employment, innovation and education for sustainable development, which included a proposal promoting five key areas for the active engagement of youth in those processes, so that young people were motivated to participate in mutual work towards solutions in building more sustainable futures (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2019/4, paras. 68–88).

26. The Chair invited the Committee to discuss how youth could engage meaningfully in the Committee's work on strategically planning the new post-2019 implementation framework that would last until 2030 ("Education for Sustainable Development Strategic Planning 2030") and sounded out some ideas on including the issue of youth engagement in the draft concept note for the new implementation framework "Education for Sustainable Development Strategic Planning 2030". Those ideas included the following:

- (a) Holding a youth forum in one of the member States to discuss the draft concept note for the new ECE framework for implementation ("Education for Sustainable Development Strategic Planning 2030");
- (b) Establishing an ad hoc group of young people representing the member States;
- (c) Including an item on youth, education for sustainable development and the Sustainable Development Goals in the concept note;
- (d) Including a youth representative in the national delegations to the ECE Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development.

27. Regarding including a reference to youth in the four strands of the draft concept note for the post-2019 implementation framework "Education for Sustainable Development Strategic Planning 2030", the following proposals were made:

- (a) "Policy advancement":
  - Making provision for the active involvement of youth in policy planning, implementation and evaluation.
  - Policies should address the multiple dimensions of sustainable development in a holistic, fair and gender-responsive way.
  - All relevant stakeholders should allocate resources to empower youth as change agents for education for sustainable development.

<sup>2</sup> For additional details regarding the position paper, see <https://en.unesco.org/esdfor2030>.

- (b) “Whole institution approach”:
  - Educational institutions and Governments should provide institutional support and resources for youth-led change processes towards sustainability.
  - Enhancement of collective action among sustainability initiatives.
  - Recognition of youth as equal partners to accelerate the operational transformation of educational institutions towards sustainability.
- (c) “Learning on education for sustainable development and youth”:
  - Educational institutions and Governments should encourage and support youth and educators to experiment with innovative learning approaches.
  - Monitor and evaluate those learning approaches to determine their effectiveness and efficiency in promoting education for sustainable development.
  - Scale the impact of successful learning approaches to different geographic and institutional contexts.
  - Build capacities of youth as trainers and peer-to-peer educators for education for sustainable development.
  - Enhance the capacity of existing educators and trainers to empower youth to engage on education for sustainable development.
- (d) “Local communities, youth and education for sustainable development”:
  - Respect the voices of youth in community-driven education for sustainable development initiatives.
  - Support youth-led education for sustainable development initiatives in local communities.
  - Encourage youth to engage with and learn through real life situations.
- (e) “Entrepreneurship, youth and education for sustainable development”:
  - Recognize the importance of entrepreneurship in contributing to the goals of education for sustainable development.
  - Create policy and funding conditions for new start-ups.
  - Develop the capacity of youth to set up and manage enterprises.
- (f) “Sustainability challenges, opportunities and youth”:
  - Enable all youth to understand and critically appreciate the complexities and uncertainties of sustainability challenges and opportunities.
  - Empower youth to develop visions of a more sustainable future.
  - Equip students with the competencies to transform their personal lives, educational institutions, communities and countries.

28. With regard to the possible ways of addressing youth issues in the future framework on implementation, the following proposals were made:

- (a) The inclusion of the issues as a fifth strand in the draft concept note “Education for Sustainable Development Strategic Planning 2030”;
- (b) The inclusion of the issues in an initiative of the ECE Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development under the title “Youth calling for action: ECE Education for Sustainable Development Strategic Planning 2030 for Youth”;
- (c) Youth issues to be infused horizontally into the four strands of the ECE draft implementation framework “Education for Sustainable Development Strategic Planning 2030”;

(d) The preparation of a workplan, under the ECE Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development, with specific actions and activities for youth, education for sustainable development and the Sustainable Development Goals.

29. In the ensuing discussion, the members reflected on the above-mentioned proposals and expressed their opinions on possible ways of engaging youth in the process. A number of existing challenges in addressing the issue were mentioned, including the current formal format of the Steering Committee's annual meetings, identification of the relevant organization/platform representing youth and agreement on the methods and mechanisms for its involvement.

30. The Chair made final remarks regarding the importance of discussing the present agenda item and highlighted the fact that, during the past fifteen years, the Committee's priority work on reorienting education systems towards education for sustainable development had mainly focused on the new generation as the driver for changing the mindset of citizens. Therefore, it was important to acknowledge that youth was the catalyst for change and the Committee must decide how to involve and engage youth from the ECE region in its work.

31. The Committee agreed to mandate a representative of Youth Sexual Awareness for Europe to: (a) contact the largest networks and major groups representing youth organizations over the course of the next two months and communicate to them the outcomes of the Steering Committee's work on elaborating the new implementation framework "Education for Sustainable Development Strategic Planning 2030" and its priorities; (b) coordinate the collection of and compile ideas, suggestions and recommendations regarding solutions to the proposed issues for discussion, sounded out during the meeting; and (c) come up with an elaborated proposal or concept note regarding the vision of youth on its involvement in the process, to be presented at the next Steering Committee meeting in 2020.

#### **IV. Recent activities to promote education for sustainable development in other international forums**

32. A representative of the UNESCO Section for Education for Sustainable Development updated participants on current developments in the context of UNESCO regarding the process of drawing up the future of education for sustainable development, building on the lessons learned since the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005–2014) and taking into consideration the fact that the first phase of the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development was due to end in 2019. The presentation focused on the introduction of the new post-2019 Global Action Programme framework on education for sustainable development, followed by a discussion on how it could be linked to the regional-level implementation of the ECE framework and the proposal for alignment of reporting and indicators for the post-Global Action Programme phase.

33. The new post-2019 framework on education for sustainable development, entitled Education for Sustainable Development: Towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (Education for Sustainable Development for 2030), had been agreed upon and adopted at the 206th session of the UNESCO Executive Board (Paris, 3–17 April 2019) and covered the period from 2020 to 2030. It provided a vision of how the future of education for sustainable development was built upon the lessons learned and of how to adapt to the new emerging issues and trends to be fed into the overall strategy. It had been developed through broad consultations with various stakeholders, including: four brainstorming symposiums held in Asia, Europe, Africa and Latin America; a technical consultation meeting with 116 member States; a global online public consultation; a consultation with the United Nations and other international organizations; and the annual reviews of Global Action Programme implementation.

34. The new framework<sup>3</sup> had three major aspects to be considered and integrated into the education system: transformative action; structural changes; and technological advances. The overall objective of “Education for Sustainable Development for 2030” was to contribute to the building of a more just and sustainable world through the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals through education, in response to the increased importance placed on education for sustainable development as an integral element of Sustainable Development Goal 4 and a key enabler of all the other Goals, as recognized by General Assembly resolution 72/222. In terms of implementation as an overarching approach to education for sustainable development, the new framework proposed a threefold approach, i.e.: (a) continued support to all education for sustainable development activities that contributed to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, even without explicit reference to the Goals; (b) education for sustainable development that could enhance learners’ and the general public’s understanding of sustainable development through communication and advocacy in educational settings with explicit reference to the Goals; and (c) education for sustainable development that could promote critical and contextualized understanding of the Goals by raising questions regarding the interlinkages and tensions between different Goals and providing learners with the opportunity to practise balancing acts.

35. In terms of the actual implementation details, the focus on the five priority action areas and scaling-up through cascaded partners remained valid. With a view to establishing a more holistic approach, the five partner networks would be replaced by one inclusive network of partners, with the work focused on national level initiatives and stronger member State engagement and ownership. The member States would be expected to contribute to the building of a more just and sustainable world through the five action areas and by mobilizing multi-stakeholders and supporting their networking and decision-making processes at the national level, advocacy and communication efforts for Sustainable Development Goals and nationwide initiatives on education for sustainable development. UNESCO was expected to support nationwide initiatives on education for sustainable development through an inclusive network of partners, provide monitoring and evaluation of the Global Action Programme and ensure evidence-informed implementation.

36. In the context of the regional implementation of the new framework on education for sustainable development for 2030 and its relevance to the ECE Strategy and other regional networks, UNESCO was planning to hold regional dialogues at the beginning of the new phase so that national level initiatives were well established and could be fed into the regional approaches for the overall work on Sustainable Development Goals at the global level. With regard to the relevance of the UNESCO “Education for Sustainable Development for 2030” framework to the ECE post-2019 framework for implementation of the Strategy, the focus of strand 1: Whole institution approach to education for sustainable development was relevant to priority action area 2 on the whole institution approach of the UNESCO “Education for Sustainable Development for 2030” framework. There was particular interest in collaborating on strand 2: Quality education and education for sustainable development of the ECE framework, which would be relevant to the overall UNESCO work on advancing policy within priority action area 1 of the “Education for Sustainable Development for 2030” framework.

37. ECE work on strand 3: Digital education, information and communications technology and education for sustainable development would be relevant to UNESCO work on the “Technological future”, a key reflection area, and the work on strand 4: Entrepreneurship, employment, innovation and education for sustainable development of UNECE’s framework would be relevant to “Education for Sustainable Development for 2030” priority action areas 3 on “Educators” and 4 on “Youth”, as well as the work on proceeding with structural changes and exploring alternatives to consumer societies.

38. The UNESCO 1974 Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and

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<sup>3</sup> UNESCO, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Beyond 2019, document 204 EX/28. Available at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000261625>.



Fundamental Freedoms was the basis of the reporting scheme for global indicator 4.7.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals. UNESCO had recently concluded the sixth reporting process,<sup>4</sup> which had also covered monitoring the global indicators for targets 12.8 and 13.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals related to, respectively, sustainable consumption and climate change education.

39. UNESCO, as a custodian agency for monitoring the global indicator for target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, had developed a monitoring tool and conducted additional studies regarding the topic. Currently, UNESCO was working on updating the questionnaire and methodology for the seventh reporting process (due in 2020) on the implementation of its 1974 Recommendation and the proposal was to integrate into that process the most recent trends, developments and issues around monitoring the global indicator for target 4.7. Throughout the current year, expert consultations would take place and the Steering Committee members and other partners were invited to take part in that process should they be interested in doing so. The results of the seventh reporting process were expected to be produced by early 2021 and would be submitted to the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators for approval.

40. Regarding UNESCO and ECE collaboration on aligning reporting and indicators in the post-Global Action Programme phase, it was proposed that ECE national reporting of the post-2019 implementation framework be aligned with UNESCO country reporting for monitoring of the global indicators for targets 4.7.1, 12.8.1 and 13.3.1. The purpose being to avoid double reporting and to focus on ensuring stronger monitoring of the global indicators at country level within the region, as well as to create space for deeper insight into regional specificities around results of global monitoring and also feed further discussion of action at the ECE region level.

41. The representative of UNESCO then informed the Committee about the upcoming events to be held between 2019 and 2020, including: a high-level political forum on sustainable development (New York, 9–18 July 2019); the fourth UNESCO Forum for Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (Hanoi, 2 and 3 July 2019); the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly (New York, 17–30 September 2019); the fortieth session of the UNESCO General Conference (Paris, 12–27 November 2019); and a UNESCO conference on the global launch of the post-2019 education for sustainable development framework (Berlin, 2–4 June 2020).

42. During the ensuing discussion, it was clarified that UNESCO ensured the involvement of environment ministries and other relevant national agencies by organizing annual technical consultations with national Governments. Regarding monitoring of target 4.7, the questionnaire would be revised through the multi-stakeholder participation process and sent to the education ministries, with a view to them consulting with other relevant national agencies responsible for education for sustainable development at the national level. It was further clarified that: UNESCO would support the establishment of national multi-stakeholder platforms within each country that would lead national level initiatives; and each member State would be encouraged to create or strengthen and take ownership of existing national initiatives for “Education for Sustainable Development for 2030”. Among those initiatives there would be a number of flagship projects addressing special issues. The speaker highlighted the fact that UNESCO acknowledged that regional initiatives and platforms such as the ECE Strategy and the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development complemented national initiatives and that those regional platforms would play an important role in ensuring the success of the new “Education for Sustainable Development for 2030” framework. On the question of whether the post-2019 reporting mechanisms of UNESCO and ECE would be merged into a joint mechanism, the Chair of the Committee clarified that both organizations would maintain their own questionnaires to preserve the peculiarities of the new main strands of work, but that there would be a correlation between a number of issues from the main strands of the work of the two organizations.

43. The representative of the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development presented a review of developments and events held in the

<sup>4</sup> Available at <https://en.unesco.org/themes/gced/sdg47progress>.

framework of the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development since its establishment. After presenting a brief history, the speaker informed the participants about the Mediterranean Strategy's current action plan and achievements in its implementation, as well as about the outcomes of completed training sessions and consultation meetings and the way forward.

44. The speaker briefed the participants about the upcoming second meeting of the Mediterranean Committee on Education for Sustainable Development and a regional workshop on education for sustainable development (Heraklion, Greece, 24–26 June 2019). The aim of the meeting would be to: (a) review the progress made on the mainstreaming and application of the Mediterranean Strategy's action plan; (b) provide input to the major processes into which the Mediterranean Strategy had been integrated; (c) present the results of European Union-funded national capacity-building activities on education for sustainable development; and (d) promote the major thematic priorities of the region through the lens of education for sustainable development, including thematic areas on sustainable consumption and production, combating marine litter, biodiversity and biosphere reserves and refugee-related issues.

45. The speaker informed the participants about the aims and objectives of the ongoing education for sustainable development programmes, which contributed to the implementation of the Mediterranean Education Initiative for Environment and Sustainability/Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development action plan's thematic priorities, such as the Non-conventional Water Resources Programme in the Mediterranean, the Marine Litter programme and other programmes. The speaker concluded by presenting the overall outcomes, results and impact of the educational and awareness-raising activities carried out in the Mediterranean region during the implementation period 2008–2018.

46. The representative of Hungary updated the Committee on the results and outcomes of the Carpathian Convention Seminar on Education for Sustainable Development (Budapest, 16–18 April 2019). The seminar had been organized by the Ministry of Human Capacities of Hungary, in collaboration with United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Vienna – Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention – and the Ministry of Agriculture of Hungary. The project had been funded by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety and actively supported by the Advisory Assistance Programme for environmental protection in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and other countries neighbouring the European Union. It had been supervised by the German Environment Agency and the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation. The main purpose of the seminar had been to facilitate the launch of cooperation or expand the scope of existing collaboration among the communities of stakeholder groups in education for sustainable development in the Carpathian region, and thus contribute to the implementation of education for sustainable development policies promoted by prominent international organizations such as ECE.

47. The speaker highlighted the fact that placing a transdisciplinary approach at the centre of the event had been a novelty, as previous Carpathian Convention events had worked with a multidisciplinary approach but had attracted experts from well-defined areas, such as academics or policy experts. The aim of the seminar had been to bring a mixed group of teachers, school leaders, educational managers, maintenance experts, policymakers, teacher trainers and academics together. The transnational exchange that had taken place at the event had indeed been important, but the programme had been set up to generate meaningful exchange between practitioners from those different fields of education for sustainable development. The Carpathian Convention Seminar had focused on two key thematic areas: the whole institution approach in education for sustainable development and supporting teachers' good practices and developing educators' education for sustainable development competences to enable and empower teachers to deliver quality education. The speaker presented the details of the seminar's programme and focused on the main results oriented towards the joint efforts of the Carpathian countries in embedding education for sustainable development in the region and improving the adaptation of culturally embedded practices.

48. The representative of Global Education Network Europe presented the background, activities and accomplishments of the organization, which represented a network of

ministries, agencies and other bodies with responsibility for global education policy, strategy, funding and coordination at the national level in European countries. The main goal of Global Education Network Europe was to strengthen education and learning for positive social change, including social justice, human rights and sustainability, locally and globally. In order to achieve that goal, the Network: organized biannual policy-sharing and learning round tables with participating countries; developed voluntary peer reviews whenever there was a need at national level, including the identification of good policy and practices that other countries might learn from, along with robust recommendations for improvement and increase in quality and reach; supported countries with less experience and little funding available in a structured and flexible way, aiming to deepen their commitment, and grow policy and provision; provided opportunities to connect academics, researchers and policy makers in the field of global education, in particular through the creation of the Academic Network on Global Education and Learning; and stimulated recognition of and learning from global education practices in the field through the annual edition of the Global Education Awards and by producing and disseminating relevant information and critical reflection on global cross-cutting issues and on quality global education. Global education as a public policy opened and supported space for citizens and organizations to share relevant information, to reflect critically on ongoing policies and practices and on fairer alternatives and to experiment with them in order to bring about change.

49. The Committee took note of the presentations of UNESCO, the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development, the Ministry of Human Capacities of Hungary and Global Education Network Europe and pointed out that collaboration between the Steering Committee, UNESCO and other partners was important for the implementation of the current and future education for sustainable development agenda.

## **V. Outcomes of the first meeting and of the subsequent work of the Ad Hoc Group for Strategic Planning: the draft concept note for the post-2019 implementation framework**

50. At its thirteenth meeting, the ECE Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development had discussed the future of education for sustainable development with a view to providing innovative suggestions, tools and recommendations for bridging gaps and giving new impetus to education for sustainable development and the role of the Steering Committee at both the regional and national levels. To address those issues, the Steering Committee had created an ad hoc group from its interested members.

51. The Steering Committee was updated on the outcomes of the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Group for Strategic Planning, held at the invitation of the Government of the Netherlands and as an in-kind contribution to the voluntary funding scheme of the Committee. Consultations between the leaders and the members of the Ad Hoc Group had continued online. As a result, the Group had elaborated the draft concept note for the post-2019 implementation framework, which incorporated the input by the Ad Hoc Group based on: (a) the discussions and recommendations of its first meeting; (b) the existing policy frameworks for the future of education for sustainable development developed by UNESCO and the European Council; and (c) the existing experience and achievements of the Steering Committee.

52. The Chair presented the draft concept note for the post-2019 implementation framework, elaborated by the members of the Ad Hoc Group, which had been submitted as an official document (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2019/4) for discussion at the fourteenth meeting of the Steering Committee. The Chair then invited the leaders of the Ad Hoc Group to present concept notes for each of the four following thematic areas outlined in the draft concept note: (a) whole institution approach to education for sustainable development – institutions as communities of transformational learning; (b) quality education and education for sustainable development; (c) digital education, information and communication technology and education for sustainable development; and (d) entrepreneurship, employment, innovation and education for sustainable development.

53. After the presentation of the concept notes by the four leaders of the thematic strands, the Chair invited the participants to form four separate working subgroups to discuss the proposed draft concept notes for each of the four thematic areas outlined in the draft concept note for the post-2019 implementation framework. Once the subgroups had completed their discussions, the selected rapporteurs from each subgroup presented to the Committee the results of the subgroups' work, providing a list of main conclusions and recommendations derived from the discussions. Those summaries would be taken into consideration by the Ad Hoc Group during the process of finalizing the draft concept note at its second meeting, to be held in Nicosia before the end of September 2019.

54. The Chair summarized the discussion, highlighting the fact that the group discussions constituted the beginning of the process of finalizing the draft concept note for the post-2019 implementation framework that would continue during the second meeting of the Ad Hoc Group.

55. The Chair proposed that the delegations discuss the draft concept note internally in the national context and invited the Committee members to provide comments on the draft document, also taking into consideration the presentations made by the leaders of the four strands discussed<sup>5</sup> and to send any comments to the secretariat before the end of June 2019.

56. The Committee took note of the information that the second meeting of the Ad Hoc Group for Strategic Planning was scheduled to be held in Nicosia in 2019 (the dates would be confirmed in cooperation with the Chair of the Steering Committee and the secretariat) with the purpose of further elaborating and finalizing the concept note for the post-2019 implementation framework, taking into consideration the comments collected from the Committee members.

57. The secretariat was mandated to send an email to the Committee members inviting them to provide comments on the draft concept note before the second meeting of the Ad Hoc Group for Strategic Planning took place.

58. The Committee asked the secretariat to incorporate the results of the discussions and all comments received in writing into the presented draft concept note for the post-2019 implementation framework and to circulate it to the Steering Committee for final approval, with the purpose of submission of the final version of the document to the next meeting of the Committee, to be held in spring 2020.

## **VI. Outline of the draft workplan for the post-2019 implementation framework**

59. The secretariat updated the Committee on the process of elaboration of the outline of the draft workplan for implementation of the ECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development after 2019, which had been prepared by the Ad Hoc Group for Strategic Planning in consultation with the Bureau. The outline was based on the draft concept note for the post-2019 implementation framework, also elaborated by the Ad Hoc Group during its first meeting. The aim was to establish a road map of activities to be undertaken during the post-2019 implementation phase to further the implementation of the Strategy at the national and international levels, in accordance with the mandate articulated by education and environment ministries at the second High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries (Batumi, Georgia, 8 June 2016).

60. The Steering Committee was invited to consider the proposed outline of the draft workplan for the post-2019 implementation of the ECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2019/3, annex I), to provide comments thereon and to send them to the secretariat before the end of June 2019.

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<sup>5</sup> Agenda item 5, available at <https://www.unecce.org/environmental-policy/education-for-sustainable-development/meetings-and-events/education-for-sustainable-development/unece-steering-committee/2019/fourteenth-meeting-of-the-unece-steering-committee-on-education-for-sustainable-development-salle-vii-palais-des-nations-geneva-switzerland/doc.html>.

61. The secretariat reported that the outcomes of the discussion and comments would be incorporated into the draft outline for further elaboration of the final document for its official submission to the next meeting of the Committee in 2020. It was clarified that, when proposing new activities, it was necessary to indicate the required funding resources, timeline and partners for implementation. It was also pointed out that all activities included in the workplan should be carefully considered, so that corresponding and realistic funds for their implementation were provided.

## **VII. Strengthening synergies with other organizations and processes**

62. A number of stakeholders informed the Steering Committee of national and international activities related to the Strategy's implementation that were planned or were currently being carried out.

63. The representative of Romania made a brief intervention regarding the efforts of the Romanian Ministry of National Education in promoting partnerships for implementing education for sustainable development, such as creating open educational resources for developing a teachers' course for education for sustainable development. The Ministry had also signed a collaboration protocol with a coalition of 100 entities from the education and environment sector in order to create a public education for sustainable development policy, which would be based on the three vertical and three horizontal priority action areas of the Batumi Ministerial Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/2/Add.2). At the end of May 2019, the Ministry planned to organize a public debate involving a wide range of national stakeholders. The policy was also supported by the Ministry of Environment. In the interim, the Department of Sustainable Development had begun setting up units for sustainable development in all ministries and an interinstitutional working group tasked with drawing up an action plan for reaching the 2020 targets of the Romanian Strategy for Sustainable Development and, subsequently, Sustainable Development Goal 4 on education.

64. The representative of the Cyprus Energy Agency, an NGO established in 2009 to promote renewable energy resources and sustainable transport, the improvement of energy efficiency and contribution to mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, informed the participants about the Youth Employment Network for Energy Sustainability in Islands project. The project benefited from a €2.3 million grant from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the European Economic Area and Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment. The project aimed to create employment opportunities for youth not in employment, education or training on islands of beneficiary States. The main objective of the project was to reduce unemployment within the target group by creating green jobs on islands. The project would work with participants members of the target group in an elaborate process to equip and prepare them for employment in green jobs in the four thematic areas: energy efficiency; renewables; sustainable tourism; and mobility. The project included: an educational programme on business innovation and the four thematic areas; a mobility scheme; a mentoring scheme; and a final stage, during which participants would work on projects offered by local, regional and national authorities for six months. The expected outcomes of the project were the following: improved employment situation of the youth concerned; increased participation in education and training of youth formerly not in employment, education or training; and innovative approaches to lowering youth unemployment.

65. The representative of the NGO network Education for Sustainable Development (Ukraine) gave a presentation about the experience and achievements of the Partnership Network "Education for Sustainable Development in Ukraine" during 2018–2019 in synergy with national and international partners. The Partnership Network had been established in 2014, uniting over 750 members who were participants in an interactive platform and were from various target groups (Government, educational institutions, scientific institutions, public organizations, national parks and others). International partners included the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNEP, the German Agency for International Cooperation and the

Ukraine Horticulture Business Development Project supported by the Government of Canada, ECE, the European Union and others. The Partnership Network's main tasks were to: participate in the decision-making process; and develop strategies, action plans and practical tools for implementing the ECE Strategy at the national and local levels in Ukraine. Green economy and sustainable public procurement-related issues were also covered by Partnership Network activities. The Partnership Network's main goals were to: unite all stakeholders on a single platform; ensure exchange of experience, information, materials and useful contacts within the Network; ensure access to and collection of available education for sustainable development-related materials and data; and promote the development of a whole new society based on the sustainable development principles. The Network promoted the strengthening of synergies between civil society and Government by enhancing involvement and policymaking and stimulating activity. It also ensured stakeholder participation by including education for sustainable development in national and local action plans and distributed knowledge about strategies and instruments of education for sustainable development among international, regional, national and local partners. The speaker briefed the participants on the input of one of the Network's main partners – the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme – into the advancement of education for sustainable development in the country. Moreover, the speaker provided an overview of the outcomes of the activities undertaken in cooperation with the national and international stakeholders, aimed at implementing the sustainable development principles, education for sustainable development and environmental policy in Ukraine.

66. The Steering Committee took note of the presentations on strengthening synergies with other organizations and processes. It welcomed the information and called for the further strengthening of synergies with other organizations and processes, especially in the light of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

## **VIII. Preparations for the next post-2019 mandatory reporting cycle under the Strategy: updating the format for reporting**

67. The Chair recalled the initial process of elaboration of the first format for reporting that had been launched pursuant to the decision of the first High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries (Vilnius, 17 and 18 March 2005), when the ECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development had been launched and it had been agreed to develop indicators for measuring the effectiveness of the implementation of the Strategy. The set of indicators had been developed by the ECE Expert Group on Indicators for Education for Sustainable Development set up following a decision of the first High-level Meeting. Three complementary progress reports provided information on the development of the indicators (see CEP/AC.13/2005/9, ECE/CEP/AC.13/2006/5 and ECE/CEP/AC.13/2008/4).

68. In the interim, the format for reporting had been used as a main tool for evaluation of national implementation efforts during the four mandatory reporting cycles undertaken in 2007, 2010, 2014 and 2018 in order to review the Strategy's implementation during the first four phases of implementation lasting from 2005 to 2007, 2008 to 2010, 2011 to 2015 and 2017 to 2019. The procedure for the review of implementation of the Strategy was contained in the workplans for the corresponding implementation phases. The related reporting templates were based on the main format for reporting, developed by the Expert Group on Indicators, taking into account the previous reporting exercises and the feedback from countries on the workability and feasibility of the indicators. After the first two reporting cycles, the template of the format for reporting had been slightly revised, in 2014 and 2018, in order to reflect the requirements of the third (2011–2015) and fourth (2017–2019) implementation phases, in consultation with the Expert Group on Indicators.

69. The format for reporting was a standard one, which provided a useful structure for processing the information received and facilitated comparison of national implementation reports. It was a concrete tool that provided complete information on countries' implementation of the ECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development at the national level, accompanied by an annex explaining in detail how it had to be completed. The format for reporting facilitated the work of member States in monitoring, upgrading and promoting education for sustainable development in the national context and in filling any

gaps in implementation. The data collected from the countries provided an overview of the Strategy's implementation at the regional level, facilitated the exchange of good practices amongst countries and was used as a reference for good practice examples for education for sustainable development implementation in the region for various organizations and other parallel policies.

70. The format for reporting consisted of the extended and detailed template (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2014/5, annex), which included 48 qualitative and quantitative indicators based on the following main issues around which the ECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development was structured:

- (a) Ensuring that policy, regulatory and operational frameworks supported the promotion of education for sustainable development;
- (b) Promotion of sustainable development through formal, non-formal and informal learning;
- (c) Equipping educators with the competence to include sustainable development in their teaching;
- (d) Ensuring that adequate tools and materials for education for sustainable development were accessible;
- (e) Promotion of research on and development of education for sustainable development;
- (f) Strengthening cooperation on education for sustainable development at all levels within the ECE region;
- (g) Fostering the conservation, use and promotion of knowledge of indigenous peoples, as well as local and traditional knowledge, in education for sustainable development;
- (h) Describing any challenges and obstacles encountered in the implementation of the Strategy;
- (i) Describing any assistance needed in implementing the Strategy at the national level.

71. In recent years, the national focal points had argued that the structure and content of the format for reporting must be revised, taking into consideration the challenges revealed during the implementation of the Strategy from 2005 up to the current time and the emerging priorities of the global and regional sustainable development agendas.

72. That need for revision of the reporting format had become more urgent for the following reasons: (a) some of the subindicators had been already achieved (for example, subindicator 1.1.1 "Is the [United Nations Economic Commission for Europe] Strategy for [Education for Sustainable Development] available in your national language(s)?"); (b) some issues had been extended or developed beyond the scope covered by a concrete indicator (for example, issue 3 "Equip educators with the competence to include [sustainable development] in their teaching" could currently refer to all educators, including, but not limited to, teachers and all interested parties working in the field of education for sustainable development); (c) some issues evaluated the priority areas only partially (for example, issue 2 "Promote [sustainable development] through formal, non-formal and informal learning", where the subindicators were limited to whole school approaches); and (d) the focus of the ECE "Education for Sustainable Development Strategic Planning 2030" framework on the four new strands with a new dynamic and potential.

73. The Chair proposed reconsidering the template of the format for reporting, taking into consideration the above-mentioned reasons, and establishing an ad hoc group of experts who would revise the existing and/or elaborate a new format for reporting, working by means of face-to-face and online meetings, with a mandate to elaborate the format for reporting according to: (a) the main issues covered by the Strategy; (b) the achievements of the Strategy's implementation from 2005 up to the current time; (c) the new implementation framework "Education for Sustainable Development Strategic Planning 2030", in order to provide the member States with a flexible, revised and updated format for reporting that would respond to the Committee's new mission. The draft of the revised format for reporting

would be presented to the ECE Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development at its fifteenth meeting in 2020, where it will be discussed, prior to its finalization in 2021.

74. After the ensuing discussion, the Committee:

(a) Agreed to establish an ad hoc group of experts – the Ad Hoc Group on Indicators – who would work on updating and/or revising the existing format for reporting for the next implementation phase from 2020 to 2030 in correspondence with the new concept note for the post-2019 implementation framework, which was currently being drafted by the Ad Hoc Group for Strategic Planning, and nominated Mr. Roel van Raaij, the national focal point of the Netherlands, as the Chair of the Ad Hoc Group on Indicators;

(b) Agreed to align the reporting timeline for the fifth mandatory reporting cycle with the reporting timelines of the UNESCO post-Global Action Programme implementation plan, i.e. to have two intermediate implementation phases between 2020 and 2030; the first from 2020 to 2025 and the second from 2026 to 2030;

(c) Agreed also to align the new reporting format for the evaluation of the implementation of the ECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development with the UNESCO monitoring framework to avoid double reporting; i.e. to revise the ECE set of indicators for monitoring and evaluation, taking into consideration the synergy between the three following mechanisms: (a) the new UNESCO monitoring framework “Education for Sustainable Development for 2030”; (b) the annual reporting mechanism of the Sustainable Development Goals (including Sustainable Development Goal 4); and (c) the ECE monitoring and evaluation framework for the Strategy;

(d) Stressed the importance of taking into consideration experiences (both positive and negative) of the previous evaluation cycles from those who had collected the information and those who had undertaken the analysis of the surveys/indicators;

(e) Asked the secretariat to send an email of invitation for expressions of interest in membership of the Ad Hoc Group on Indicators, with the proposed composition of five members. The selection of members would be based on specific criteria, to be identified in cooperation with the Chair of the Ad Hoc Group on Indicators, the Chair of the ECE Steering Committee and the secretariat.

## **IX. Status of the trust fund and resource requirements for 2018–2019**

75. The secretariat presented its assessment of the current status of the education for sustainable development trust fund and resource requirements for 2019–2020 as presented in information paper No. 5.<sup>6</sup>

76. The Committee took note of the information from the secretariat that the dedicated staff position could not be maintained continuously under the current level of funding, affecting the ability of the secretariat to service the process efficiently (due to the shortage of funds, the current dedicated staff position would be terminated on June 30, 2019; the date of its renewal would depend on the availability of resources).

77. The Chair pointed to the important and critical role of the secretariat’s support in ensuring the effective functioning of the Steering Committee in achieving its goals and encouraged the member States to consider making financial and in-kind contributions to the ECE education for sustainable development process, taking into consideration national circumstances and United Nations procedures.

78. The Chair stressed the critical role that the national focal points must play in appropriately informing their Governments about the importance of contributing financially

<sup>6</sup> Available at <https://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/education-for-sustainable-development/meetings-and-events/education-for-sustainable-development/unece-steering-committee/2019/fourteenth-meeting-of-the-unece-steering-committee-on-education-for-sustainable-development-salle-vii-palais-des-nations-geneva-switzerland/doc.html>.



or in-kind to the Committee's trust fund, taking into consideration the fact that the operations of the Committee were based exclusively on member States' voluntary contributions.

79. The Steering Committee expressed its gratitude to those member States that had made contributions in support of the education for sustainable development process during the period since the preceding Steering Committee meeting. It also welcomed the expressions of future support from several member States.

80. In view of the critical status of the funds, the Steering Committee requested the secretariat to facilitate the issue (preferably in early autumn) of the formal letters to the member States' education and environment authorities with the invitation to consider contributing to the implementation of the ECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development for 2020 and beyond.

## **X. Calendar of meetings**

81. The Steering Committee agreed to hold its fifteenth meeting on 7 and 8 May 2020 in Geneva.

## **XI. Other business**

82. No additional items were proposed for discussion.

83. The Steering Committee asked the secretariat to upload on the meeting website the presentations and other relevant materials discussed during the meeting.

84. The Chair provided some concluding remarks on the two days of the meeting and thanked the speakers and the Committee for its constructive and efficient work. She also thanked the interpreters for the excellent job they had done and officially closed the meeting.

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