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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****Fifteenth meeting**

Geneva, 19 and 20 October 2020

**Report of the Steering Committee on Education for  
Sustainable Development on its fifteenth meeting****I. Introduction**

1. The fifteenth meeting of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) was held on 19 and 20 (morning) October 2020 in Geneva with remote participation, due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.<sup>1</sup>

**A. Attendance**

2. Delegations from 26 ECE member States attended the meeting: Andorra, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Uzbekistan. A representative of the Permanent Delegation of the European Union also participated in the meeting.

3. From the United Nations system, the representatives of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), including the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe, participated.

4. Representatives of the Union for the Mediterranean and the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Programme 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); Education for Sustainable Development (Ukraine); Planet’ERE (France); Soka Gakkai International (Switzerland); Journalists for Human Rights (North Macedonia); NGO Support Centre (Cyprus); the Mediterranean

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<sup>1</sup> Meeting documents, including statements and presentations, are available on the meeting web page at <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/fifteenth-meeting-unece-steering-committee-education-sustainable>.



Information Office for Environment (MIO-ESCDE), Culture and Sustainable Development (Greece); European ECO-Forum, Civil Society Organizations Partnership Network “Education for Sustainable Development” (Ukraine); the International University of La Rioja (Spain); Cyprus University of Technology; Georgian Technical University; the Interdisciplinary Coordination Centre for ESD of the State Ecological Academy of Postgraduate Education and Management (Ukraine); the University of Gloucestershire (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland); and Western Sydney University (Australia).

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

6. The Steering Committee adopted the agenda for its fifteenth meeting as set out in document ECE/CEP/AC.13/2020/1/Rev.1.

## **II. Election of officers**

7. The Steering Committee elected its chair, vice-chair, bureau members and observers as follows:

### *Chair*

Ms. Aravella Zachariou (Cyprus)

### *Vice-Chair*

Ms. Jyldyz Duishenova (Kyrgyzstan)

### *Bureau members*

Ms. Bianca Bilgram (Germany)

Ms. Nino Gokheshvili (Georgia) (alternate: Ms. Manana Ratiani (Georgia))

Ms. Imbi Henno (Estonia)

Ms. Monika Reti (Hungary)

Ms. Daniella Tilbury (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

### *Bureau observers from non-governmental organizations*

Ms. Maryna Diachenko (Civil Society Organizations Partnership Network “Education for Sustainable Development” (Ukraine))

Mr. Michel Ricard (Planet’ERE (France))

Ms. Irina Semko (Regional Centre of Expertise “Ecodemia” (Belarus))

Mr. Michael Scoullos (MIO-ESCDE (Greece))

### *Bureau observers from academia*

Mr. Daniel Burgos (Vice-Rector for International Research, International University of La Rioja (Spain))

Mr. Paul Vare (University of Gloucestershire (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland))

8. The Steering Committee reiterated that, in the absence of the elected Bureau member from a given member State, his/her functions could be assumed by another representative of that member State present at a given meeting (with prior notification).

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

#### **A. Summary outcomes of the progress report on the fourth phase of implementation**

9. The Chair recalled that development of the fourth progress report had been made possible thanks to the Government of Cyprus, which had tasked 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. The Chair also recalled that, at the fourteenth meeting of the Steering Committee (Geneva, 2 and 3 May 2019), a representative of Cyprus had presented the preliminary findings of the draft 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, which had been submitted before January 2019. Some reports had not been included in the analysis due to late submission, while other reports had been submitted only in Russian.<sup>2</sup> Since February 2019, an additional 8 countries had submitted national reports; therefore, the updated version of the progress report included analysis of 32 national implementation reports, except that of Ukraine, which had been submitted in October 2020.

11. The quality of the reports submitted was generally high as, apart from quantitative data, countries had also provided qualitative data, such as examples and explanations. Also, despite a slight decrease in the number of member States submitting national reports (32 compared to 35 in the third evaluation phase), 6 countries (mostly of the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia region) who had not participated in the third phase of the evaluation, had submitted their reports – possibly an indication of increased focus on ESD by the countries of that region.

12. The Chair stated that the draft report had been reviewed by an external expert from academia, whom he thanked for his work.

13. A representative of Cyprus gave a presentation on progress achieved and challenges encountered in the fourth phase of implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for ESD, focusing on major findings, conclusions, challenges and main recommendations.

14. The speaker drew attention to the following main recommendations made on the basis of analysis of the data obtained through the national implementation reports, the ensuing conclusions and identified challenges:

(a) At the level of policy, regulatory and operational frameworks supporting the promotion of ESD, the most important recommendation was to invest more effort in establishing coordinating policies for promoting ESD within countries;

(b) National mechanisms could be established for monitoring progress achieved regarding policies implemented, or to measure outcomes. Furthermore, a number of member States had highlighted the need to shed light on how ESD was implemented in higher education;

(c) In an effort to strengthen student assessment, focusing more on knowledge, skills and competences and less on values and attitudes, it was important to further develop quality assessment systems, which should explicitly address ESD. Additionally, more emphasis should be placed on assessing how values and attitudes were affected by the implementation of the Strategy in the future, so as to not only focus attention on cognitive outcomes of ESD Strategy implementation, but also on affective outcomes that possibly

<sup>2</sup> ECE/CEP/AC.13/2019/2, para. 10.

affected learners' beliefs regarding ESD-related issues. In order to change the mindset of students and future citizens to be targeted on sustainable development issues, more emphasis should be placed on shaping values and attitudes, as currently the emphasis was more on developing knowledge, skills and competences;

(d) Although non-formal and informal education were gaining attention in ESD, as predicted in previous evaluation cycles, there was an emerging need to establish mechanisms to monitor and assess non-formal and informal initiatives;

(e) Standardization of learning outcomes pursued was needed, especially addressing attitudes and values. There was also an emerging need to address attitudes and values on sustainable development issues more explicitly through formal education;

(f) Quality criteria could be created for a whole institution approach, addressing various parameters of ESD implementation, such as learning outcomes, school policy, the learning process, collaboration with local stakeholders, etc. Alternatively, stakeholders involved in education institutions could be trained to plan and implement such approaches, enabling them to create approaches tailored to their organizations' needs and specificities;

(g) Regarding educators' competences to address ESD, further research was required on the content of tertiary-level initial teacher-training programmes. Teachers' competence development was further enforced by legislative changes regarding teacher certification and, in some countries, ESD was a required part of teacher training. There was also an emerging need to strengthen government support to create synergies addressing leaders and administrators, equipping them with competences to facilitate ESD implementation and enabling them to better monitor it at the school level;

(h) Regarding ESD tools and materials, there was a need to: establish universal quality control mechanisms across countries; coordinate evaluation mechanisms across member States; and further train educators to use those tools;

(i) More research should be conducted on the evaluation of outcomes of the Strategy's implementation and more funding should be allocated to both research and dissemination of good practices. Member States highlighted the need for increased networking opportunities and sharing of knowledge across the ECE region.

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

16. During the discussion, the issue arose of possible external validation of the report as an opportunity to make an impact with the data and extend the Steering Committee's reach. A member also asked if the Committee could discuss documentation preparation processes in general and adopt a formal, more inclusive process that would add validity and representation. ECE was also requested to follow processes similar to those of other United Nations agencies (e.g., UNESCO, UNEP), which addressed issues of representation and inclusivity.

17. The secretariat clarified that, in line with current practice, validation of data was never requested or carried out but, should the Committee decide to validate data in the future, it must decide on the form of validation and make the appropriate provisions.

18. The Committee took note of the presentation of the draft progress report and its findings and, due to the shortened duration of the hybrid meeting, agreed to consider certain items (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2020/1/Rev.1, paras. 5–6) during the additional two-hour online session, scheduled for 6 November 2020. It was agreed that the decision on the agenda items would be made during the above-mentioned additional session.

## **B. Update on the Steering Committee’s mission and methods of work, the national focal points’ role in the context of current developments and new priorities for the future**

19. The secretariat updated the Committee about the origins, role and future of the Steering Committee, its methods of work and the role of national focal points with the aim of briefing new members on the work accomplished, the mission and the new priorities emerged in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

20. The Steering Committee on ESD had been established at the First High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries (Vilnius, 17–18 March 2005) following negotiations held at the Fifth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Kyiv, 21–23 May 2003). Its mandate, initially due to expire in 2015, had been extended till 2030 at the Second High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries (Batumi, Georgia, 8 June 2016), aligning with the timespan of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals. Given that education was a cross-cutting issue and a driver for the achievement of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals during the current decade, the Committee would focus on promoting the implementation of the Strategy for ESD, contributing to the achievement all Sustainable Development Goals and especially target 4.7 thereof.

21. The Committee’s work on elaborating future directions had resulted in the drafting of new strategic policy documents, namely the “Framework for the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD up to 2030”, to be presented for adoption at the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries (Nicosia, 5–7 October 2022), adapting the Committee’s strategies and methods of work to rapidly changing realities.

22. The role and active involvement of new national focal points was crucial in coordinating cooperation with the Committee and also in contributing to inter-agency cooperation on implementing the Strategy at the national level. The concerned agencies were primarily authorities from the education and environment sectors, but could be also from other concerned sectors, responsible for in-country ESD-strategy implementation. Therefore, it was vital for focal points to remain active and connected with key persons in relevant sectoral authorities within their countries. New focal points could contact the secretariat for clarifications regarding the performance of their role in their countries and as Steering Committee members.

23. The Committee took note of the information about the Steering Committee’s mission and methods of work.

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

24. The secretariat updated participants on the status of the Swiss-funded capacity-building workshop in Azerbaijan.

25. The national workshop “Learning for Sustainability in Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Azerbaijan” (originally scheduled to be held on 15 and 16 April 2020 in Baku) would focus on implementing the Strategy’s priority action area (c) on “Strengthening technical and vocational education and training in support of sustainable development and the transition to a green economy”. The workshop would also contribute to the implementation of the Strategy’s current workplan, which highlighted the importance of workshops on ESD, in particular for economies in transition, to strengthen subregional cooperation and networking, to ensure experience-/knowledge-sharing and to help keep ESD on national and subregional agendas, underlining that it was important to continue building the capacity of member States to retool technical and vocational education and training to support sustainability and the transition to a green economy.

26. Due to the pandemic and ensuing international travel restrictions, it had been decided to postpone the workshop, first to June 2020 and then to the autumn of 2020. However, the emerging political situation in Azerbaijan had made those plans untenable. The workshop

(in-person or online) would be held in the coming months at a date to be agreed with the national counterparts.

27. The Chair thanked the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation for crucial support and funding a series of capacity-building workshops on integrating ESD into technical and vocational education and training systems, held during the past few years in Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, Armenia and Georgia. The secretariat looked forward to continuing the established cooperation with the Government of Switzerland and to its important support in organizing capacity-building activities and/or other programme-related activities.

28. The Chair highlighted the importance of capacity-building activities as a way of exchanging expertise and good practices and invited Steering Committee members to discuss the next round of capacity-building workshops to be organized during the next cycle of the Strategy's implementation as from 2021.

29. Participants highlighted that the practice of organizing capacity-building workshops based on national needs should be maintained. Moreover, participants discussed proposals for organizing special meetings or events (in-person or online) on the priority issues from the new strategic framework of implementation.<sup>3</sup> It was recalled that, during the Steering Committee's May 2020 online consultation meeting, the secretariat had proposed investigating the possibility of organizing a meeting of the youth representatives with experts to clarify the meaning of the term "whole institution approach". The representative of the Netherlands volunteered to organize a symposium on the "whole institution approach" for interested experts and Steering Committee members in September 2021.

30. The secretary of the Committee also thanked the Government of Switzerland for its support for capacity-building activities, stressing that the series of workshops organized during the past few years had been funded by and based on the development cooperation priorities of the Government of Switzerland. Such a practice was beneficial both for donors (in terms of national development cooperation priorities) and beneficiaries. He encouraged other member States with similar cooperation programmes to follow the Swiss example and volunteer to fund and organize capacity-building workshops in countries of interest within the framework of the Strategy for ESD.

31. The Committee took note of the information regarding the pending capacity-building activity in Azerbaijan and agreed to hold the national workshop (in-person or online) in Azerbaijan as soon as possible, the political and pandemic-related situation permitting.

32. The Committee took note of the proposals to continue organizing capacity-building activities based on a demand-driven approach. Capacity-building events (in-person or online) to be organized during the next decade could focus on priority areas of the newly drafted strategic framework for implementation of the Strategy up to 2030.

33. The Committee asked the secretariat to circulate an electronic message to the member States, inviting them to express interest in seeking opportunities for funding capacity-building activities on issues of interest to the Steering Committee.

#### **IV. Status of the trust fund, resource requirements and fundraising efforts**

34. The secretariat presented the current status of the ESD trust fund and resource requirements for 2020–2021 (information paper No. 3).

35. The Committee took note of the information that, as in recent years, the dedicated staff position could not be maintained continuously under the current level of funding, affecting the secretariat's ability to service the process efficiently (due to the shortage of funds, the current dedicated staff position would be terminated on 30 November 2020; the date of its renewal would depend on the availability of resources).

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<sup>3</sup> See <https://unece.org/environment/documents/2021/05/working-documents/information-paper-no-6-pre-final-draft-concept-note>.

36. The Chair stressed the important and critical role of the secretariat's support in ensuring the Steering Committee's effective functioning and emphasized that it was critical to support the secretariat, particularly at the current time, given the key place of ESD on the international agenda, and also its role in assisting member States in integrating new strategic planning priorities into the new framework of the Strategy's implementation and supporting the activities carried out under the Strategy. The Chair also pointed to the importance of the secretariat's support during the preparation of the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries.

37. The secretariat and the Chair expressed gratitude to those member States that had made contributions, both financial and in-kind, in 2019 and 2020, and encouraged member States to consider making contributions in the next year, recalling that activities under the Strategy were funded exclusively through member States' contributions.

38. The Committee welcomed the pledge of financial (€5,000) and in-kind contributions (e.g., organizing an online capacity-building seminar on the "whole institution approach and ESD") from the Netherlands and encouraged other member States to consider contributing to the ECE ESD trust fund in 2021 financially, as well as in-kind, taking into consideration national circumstances and United Nations procedures.

39. The Chair recalled that planning of programme activities under the Strategy must include realistic assessment of the situation regarding the funding of such activities to avoid overambitious expectations.

40. The Chair stressed national focal points' critical role in facilitating their Governments' contributions to the Committee's trust fund.

41. Following current practice, and taking into consideration the critical status of the funds, the Steering Committee requested the secretariat to facilitate the issue (before the end of 2020) of formal letters to the member States' education and environment authorities inviting them to consider contributing to the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD for 2021 and beyond.

42. The Committee asked the secretariat to circulate an email to member States to solicit possible alternative ideas for fundraising to mobilize contributions to the ESD Steering Committee trust fund.

## **V. Preparations for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries in 2022**

### **A. Organizational issues for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference**

43. The Steering Committee was informed that information paper No. 4, prepared initially for the fifteenth meeting of the Steering Committee (initially scheduled for 7–8 May 2020 and postponed to 19–20 October 2020 due to the pandemic), contained background information regarding the relevant existing and expected decisions of the Committee on Environmental Policy, including regarding organizational issues for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, the proposed framework for preparing the Conference, the requirements for hosting the event and resource requirements.

44. At its twenty-fifth session (Geneva, 13–15 November 2019), the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy, the main body responsible for organizing the ministerial conferences under the Environment for Europe process, had taken important decisions regarding the preparation and conduct of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, including the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries. The Committee on Environmental Policy had agreed on the two themes for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference: (i) Greening the economy in the pan-European region: working towards sustainable infrastructure; and (ii) Applying principles of circular economy to sustainable tourism. The Committee had expressed its gratitude to the

Government of Cyprus for offering to host the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, including the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries; welcomed the information provided by the delegation of Cyprus regarding the offer; and decided to organize the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, including the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries, in Nicosia, from 3 to 5 November 2021. The Committee had expressed appreciation for the progress in the work of the Steering Committee on ESD and encouraged members of the Committee on Environmental Policy to cooperate with the Steering Committee, especially in view of the preparations for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference.<sup>4</sup>

45. At the same session, the Committee on Environmental Policy had adopted the document “Organizational Issues for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference” (ECE/CEP/2019/19), which established the framework for preparing the Conference with guidance on such practical matters as participation, documents, side events and exhibitions, accommodation, etc., with a view to advancing the preparatory process. The Committee had also: recommended that governmental delegations contain a maximum of eight members; and invited Cyprus to actively participate in the future meetings of the Bureau of the Committee in order to keep the Committee and the Bureau informed of progress regarding all necessary preparations.<sup>5</sup>

46. However, as the dates of several major meetings and conferences had been rescheduled due to the pandemic, in order to avoid a clash with the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (Glasgow, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 1–12 November 2021), the Bureau of the Committee on Environmental Policy at its virtual meeting (4 June 2020) had agreed to recommend that the Committee at its twenty-sixth annual session (Geneva, 9–11 November 2020) consider rescheduling the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference for 2022.

47. The twenty-sixth annual session of the Committee agreed to reschedule the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, including the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries (Nicosia), for 5–7 October 2022. At that meeting, the Committee had thanked the Government of Cyprus for the continued commitment to host both those events in Cyprus; encouraged the member States, partner organizations and all interested stakeholders to actively participate in the preparation and conduct of the Conference; and asked the secretariat to follow up with the decision and to keep the Committee and the Bureau informed on the progress of all necessary preparations.<sup>6</sup>

48. The Steering Committee took note of the secretariat’s update on the relevant decisions of the Committee on Environmental Policy and asked the secretariat to keep the Steering Committee informed of developments in the course of preparations for the Conference.

## **B. Host country preparations**

49. The Steering Committee was informed that, at its twenty-fifth session (Geneva, 13–15 November 2019), the Committee on Environmental Policy had considered the document “Requirements for hosting the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference” (ECE/CEP/2019/21), which stipulated the main practical requirements that the host country should take into consideration. The specific provisions were to be stipulated in a host country agreement to be concluded between the host country and ECE (a zero draft of said agreement was currently under consideration).

50. The representative of Cyprus reported on the rescheduling of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference to 2022 and promised to keep the Steering Committee informed about developments in that regard.

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<sup>4</sup> ECE/CEP/2019/15, paras. 27 and 47 (e).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, paras. 22–27.

<sup>6</sup> ECE/CEP/2020/2, para. 19.



### **C. Official documents for consideration at the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries**

51. The secretariat informed the Committee about the official documents (information paper No. 5) to be prepared for consideration at the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries: the Draft Ministerial Statement for the High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries and the Framework of implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD up to 2030.

52. The Committee took note of the information and asked the secretariat to circulate a message to its members to solicit interest in participating in the drafting process of the Ministerial Statement.

53. The secretariat also stated that, besides the main official documents to be adopted by the High-level Meeting, the Committee might submit other documents, such as information and background papers, thematic reports and/or publications or other relevant documents, which would be presented for information rather than decision-making purposes.

### **D. Resource requirements**

54. The secretariat informed the Committee that information paper No. 4 referred to under agenda item 5 (a) contained information on estimated resource requirements for preparing the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference and contained a reference to information paper No. 19<sup>7</sup> of the Committee on Environmental Policy, which contained an estimate of extrabudgetary costs for supporting core services provided by the ECE secretariat in preparing the Ministerial Conference. The Committee on Environmental Policy had invited interested countries and organizations to make contributions (in cash and in kind) for the preparation of the Conference.<sup>8</sup>

## **VI. Outcomes of the three meetings and of the subsequent work of the Ad Hoc Group on Strategic Planning**

### **A. Draft concept note for the post-2019 implementation framework**

55. The Steering Committee was updated about the outcomes of the first and second meetings of the Ad Hoc Group on Strategic Planning (27–28 November 2018, the Hague (Netherlands); 27–28 September 2019, Nicosia). The third meeting for finalizing the draft concept note, scheduled to take place in Nicosia in March 2020, had been postponed due to the pandemic. The Ad Hoc Group had continued to work remotely, holding two online meetings (30 April and 10 July 2020) to discuss the emerging issues and challenges. It had decided to rework the document to take into consideration the new challenges faced by the global ESD community in the current circumstances.

56. The Chair of the Steering Committee briefly presented a revised draft concept note for the post-2019 implementation framework, elaborated by the members of the Ad Hoc Group (information paper No. 7) and the leaders of the four priority strands, noting that youth representatives had also been engaged in the process.

57. The members of the Ad Hoc Group and the leaders of the four drafting subgroups presented the preamble and concept notes for each of the four following thematic areas outlined in the draft document: (a) quality education; (b) whole institution approach; (c) digital education and information communication technologies; and (d) entrepreneurship, employment and innovation. It was highlighted that youth representatives to the Committee

<sup>7</sup> Available at <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/twenty-fifth-session-unece-committee-environmental-policy>.

<sup>8</sup> ECE/CEP/2019/15, para. 30.

had been actively engaged in the document's elaboration and that their remarkable comments and suggestions had been taken into consideration.

58. The main elements of the preamble included an introduction giving an overview of ongoing transitions, such as to new energy or food systems, or the climate change crisis, and proposals on learning a way out of the crisis caused by the pandemic as another urgent wake-up call. The preamble also attempted to formulate the major questions arising from the current state of affairs, the consequences for education per se; the role of youth and the process of the Strategy's implementation during the next decade 2021–2030, as well as the global process of ESD for 2023 led by UNESCO and the process guided by UNEP.

59. The expert presenting the preamble reported on the work done and comments received and noted that the document would be finalized following the addition of pending text from UNESCO regarding its scheme for reporting and suggestions. It was pointed out that alignment of the preamble focused on the overview of problems with the four strands would require further work that the Ad Hoc Group would be carrying out in the coming months.

60. The leaders of the four strands made presentations about their strands. In the ensuing discussion, a few comments and proposals were made, including the idea of better linking the content of the strands with the issues of concern outlined in the preamble to the concept note and working in partnership with other international organizations and relevant stakeholders, such the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the International Labour Organization (ILO) – the key to advancing the ambitious goals identified in the preamble.

61. During discussions, it was highlighted that, in the process of work on the whole institution approach strand, it had been agreed that said approach should permeate other sectors of society that determined decisions on sustainable development. That aspect was innovative, as a concept proposed by the formal education sector had been extended to other forums in society.

62. Some reference materials were proposed, including the UNESCO guide “Getting Climate-Ready: A Guide for Schools on Climate Action”,<sup>9</sup> which could be useful, and the “United Nations Secretary-General’s Strategy on New Technologies”,<sup>10</sup> which had an interesting focus on overcoming challenges and reconciling interests, especially in the areas of privacy and human rights, ethics, equality and equity, sovereignty and responsibility, and transparency and accountability.

63. While discussing the concept note on digital education, information and communications technologies and ESD, it was mentioned that digital technology had enormous potential for positive change but could also reinforce and magnify existing fault lines and worsen economic and other inequalities. It was proposed to look specifically into the benefits and dangers of artificial intelligence as emerging decision-making from algorithms that narrowed open information and critical thinking and to address artificial intelligence as a cross-topic, since it was based on culture and society, as well as on information and communication technologies.

64. Regarding the fourth strand on entrepreneurship, employment, innovation and ESD, a proposal was made on the eventual engagement of the ILO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, which cooperated with UNEP on work on social protection under the United Nations system in Europe and Central Asia.

65. The Committee thanked the Chair and the members of the Ad Hoc Group on Strategic Planning, as well as the secretariat, for the work done on the preamble and the four priority strands of the concept note, and for the exemplary cooperation, as well as all colleagues for their constructive comments.

66. The Committee took note of the presentation of the agenda item, i.e. the draft concept note including the preamble and the four priority strands, which would be included in the

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<sup>9</sup> Natalie Gibb (Paris, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2016). Available at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000246740.locale=en>.

<sup>10</sup> Available at [www.un.org/en/newtechnologies/images/pdf/SGs-Strategy-on-New-Technologies.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/newtechnologies/images/pdf/SGs-Strategy-on-New-Technologies.pdf).

“Framework for the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD up to 2030”, and agreed to organize an additional two-hour online session for in-depth discussion on that agenda item, to be held on 13 November 2020, and that the decision on that agenda item would be made at the sixteenth meeting of the Steering Committee in May 2021.

## **B. Draft workplan for the post-2019 implementation framework**

67. The Committee took note of information regarding the status of the process of elaborating the draft workplan for the post-2019 implementation framework for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (information paper No. 8). The draft workplan aimed to establish a road map of activities to be undertaken during the post-2019 implementation phase to further 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 and taking into consideration the timelines of the post-Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development (2015–2019) implementation plan.

68. The outline had been prepared by the secretariat based on the draft concept note for the post-2019 implementation framework, in cooperation with the Ad Hoc Group on Strategic Planning and the Bureau.

69. The Chair stated that the current draft of the workplan provided a draft list of suggested activities included in the draft concept note for the new implementation framework. It was decided that the final list of workplan activities would be revised and drafted by the members of the Ad Hoc Group on Strategic Planning after the completion of work on the new concept note for the framework for the Strategy’s implementation and that a template for the draft workplan would be discussed during the additional two-hour online session in November 2020 and that the decision on the agenda item would be made at the sixteenth meeting of the Steering Committee in May 2021.

## **VII. Outcomes of the first three meetings and of the subsequent work of the Ad Hoc Group on Indicators: the draft format for reporting on the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (2021–2030)**

70. The Chair of the Ad Hoc Group on Indicators briefly updated the Steering Committee on the outcomes of the three meetings of the Ad Hoc Group (held respectively in Utrecht, Netherlands, 23–25 October 2019; Podgorica, 16–17 December 2019; and Brussels, 12–14 February 2020). It had been planned to convene the fourth meeting of the Group in early September 2020 in the Netherlands but the event had been cancelled due to the pandemic. The fourth meeting had been due to incorporate all comments into the final document and finalize it as a definitive and final framework for monitoring and evaluation in the form of the format for reporting on the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD from 2021 to 2030.

71. The Committee was updated on the current status of work on the draft format for reporting, on the comments received and processed, and on the changes to the existing indicators included in the updated reporting format. The current version of the document had not changed since the online consultation meeting of May 2020, when only a few comments had been made on the wording to be introduced into the final revised template. Other types of comments regarding alignment with the UNESCO process of monitoring and evaluation would be taken on board after the results of the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (postponed from 2020 to May 2021) had been made available. Another important issue of concern was the alignment of the set of indicators with the four newly developed priority stands of the draft concept note for the new implementation framework that would be addressed after the finalization of the draft concept note.

72. The Committee took note of the presentation on the status of the work of the Ad Hoc Group on Indicators and agreed that the decision on the agenda item would be made during the additional two-hour online session, to be held after the draft concept note for the post-2019 framework had been finalized.

## **VIII. Outcomes of the first meeting and of the subsequent work of the Ad Hoc Group on Youth**

73. The Steering Committee was updated on the outcomes of the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Group on Youth “Education for Sustainable Development and Youth” (Vienna, 16–18 February 2020) and on the results of its work.

74. The Chair clarified that the main purpose of establishing the Ad Hoc Group on Youth had been to give young representatives of ECE member States a voice and an active role in the Committee’s decision-making and to engage them in the process of elaboration of policy directions. The Chair thanked the Government of Austria for hosting the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Group on Youth, which had provided an opportunity to inform the newly appointed youth national focal points about the objectives and priorities of the Strategy on ESD and the mission, role and work of the Steering Committee implemented up to the present, as well as to consider the options of engagement of youth in the Committee’s work in general and in particular in the process of elaboration of the new strategic framework 2030 for the next cycle of the Strategy’s implementation in the region.

75. The main objective of the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Group on Youth had been to discuss the draft concept note for the new strategic framework 2030 and to come up with an action plan on the role of young people within the discussed four strands of the new implementation framework from 2021 to 2030.

76. During the meeting, the participants had shared good practices of youth initiatives and mechanisms of participation in the different structures in their countries. Some issues and/or difficulties identified included the fragmentation of youth participation and the fact that many initiatives were duplicated within the system without any coordination. Furthermore, not all countries had formal youth engagement mechanisms and overall lifelong learning was not seen as an inherent aspect of the system. To address those challenges, several good practices had been highlighted. The most immediate steps identified were drafting basic terms of reference and minimum requirements for “meaningful youth participation”, appointing focal points within organizations to work and liaise with networks and provide (digital) platforms for engagement and sharing of best practices and mailing lists.

77. The Chair of the Steering Committee led a discussion on engaging youth and ESD in participants’ countries. Examples mentioned included a national forum on ecology and youth, the appointment of a UNESCO youth delegate to the UNESCO forum and collaborations with communities abroad. It was highlighted that having an equal interpretation of ESD was important. When environmental impacts of current activities were taken into account, the underlying and possible consequences must be considered (e.g., climate refugees).

78. According to the programme, the four workshops had been held to discuss the four priority strands of the concept note of the new post-2019 implementation framework and, as a result, the meeting had drawn up a list of concrete proposals on how to ensure youth’s active engagement in the Committee’s strategic planning process and also formulated specific recommendations for the reference of youth in the four priority strands of the draft concept note.<sup>11</sup>

79. It had been agreed to organize a second meeting of the Ad Hoc Group at the invitation of the Cyprus Youth Council and the Government of Cyprus but unfortunately the event had been postponed due to continuing pandemic-related travel restrictions.

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<sup>11</sup> Report of the Ad Hoc Group on Youth meeting available at [http://staging2.unece.org/net4all.ch/fileadmin/DAM/env/esd/15th\\_Meeting\\_SC/Doc/Virtual\\_meeting\\_7\\_May\\_2020/Item\\_7\\_-\\_Draft\\_report\\_AHG\\_on\\_Youth\\_meeting\\_Vienna\\_Feb\\_2020.pdf](http://staging2.unece.org/net4all.ch/fileadmin/DAM/env/esd/15th_Meeting_SC/Doc/Virtual_meeting_7_May_2020/Item_7_-_Draft_report_AHG_on_Youth_meeting_Vienna_Feb_2020.pdf).

80. The Chair thanked those countries that had already nominated youth national focal points to the Steering Committee and asked the secretariat to circulate a reminder email to those countries that might be interested in nominating a youth focal point.

## **IX. Education for sustainable development and youth: initiatives and actions on education for sustainable development**

81. The Chair of the Steering Committee expressed her appreciation for the enthusiastic work of the newly established Ad Hoc Group on Youth and thanked the young persons concerned for their active engagement in the revision of the new strategic framework 2030, as well as extending her special gratitude to the coordinator of the Ad Hoc Group on Youth for the excellent coordination.

82. The Ad Hoc Group coordinator briefed the Committee on the relevant work of youth and referred to the presentation of the detailed report on the outcomes of the first meeting and of the subsequent work of the Ad Hoc group on Youth given under agenda item 7 during the May 2020 virtual Steering Committee consultation meeting,<sup>12</sup> at which time the Committee had been informed about the recommendations drafted as the output of the meeting, which had discussed the role of young people in the Steering Committee and in the new strategic framework, as well as forms of youth engagement at the national and international levels.

83. The main recommendations elaborated during the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Group on Youth focused on the need to:

(a) Not limit the work to focal points, as youth work was vast and involved many different actors, but to work through existing (in)formal networks – an approach that might be more efficient;

(b) Ensure that there were clear, realistic goals and frameworks that actively involved young people within the work at the different levels;

(c) Give specific attention to the difficulties encountered by young persons from rural areas in participation: focus on digital means for inclusion;

(d) Use “youth-friendly” language, simplified to ensure that it was understandable for everyone;

(e) Implement, at the national level, checklists for minimal engagement and ensure that a clear strategy existed;

(f) Rethink the current involvement and roles of youth at the country level, working with individual United Nations Youth Delegates responsible for all sustainable development-related issues was neither inclusive nor efficient, including because of the loss of know-how due to the duration of their mandates;

(g) Ensure that any youth involvement mechanisms set up were more democratic – within existing frameworks (UNESCO Youth Forum, Economic and Social Council Youth Forum, etc.) the process lacked transparency and did not reach enough young persons;

(h) Ensure meaningful youth participation through formal and continuous mechanisms that were not based on a single delegate/representative.

84. The youth focal point and Ad Hoc Group coordinator briefed the Committee on initiatives and suggestions on how youth could be more actively engaged in ECE processes. The coordinator informed the Committee that he, together with the Group, would work on developing consolidated terms of references for the youth representatives for their work at the ECE level together with the Bureau and the Steering Committee, and at the national level. The recommendation of the Steering Committee was to share the requests of the ECE Steering Committee’s youth group with national youth councils or relevant

<sup>12</sup> See <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/virtual-consultation-meeting-unece-steering-committee-education>.

networks, to make the opportunities known as well. It was hoped that the current situation of the virtual working mode would create opportunities for greater youth involvement that would give a chance to enable youth participation at a larger scale.

85. The members expressed appreciation for the creation of the Ad Hoc Group on Youth, describing it as an excellent Steering Committee initiative. A representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland highlighted that the Government of that country was pleased to support that initiative with a nomination and financial support to the national youth focal point, who had contributed to the elaboration of the quality strand of the new strategic framework.

86. A youth representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland proposed involving youth delegates in the Committee's work at the decision-making level, perhaps even adding a youth representative to the Bureau, and pointed out that the current moment was ripe to stimulate large-scale youth participation, especially given the growing possibility of online communication.

87. A representative of UNEP updated participants on the activities of the Issue-based Coalitions for the Europe and Central Asia region – multi-partner coalitions coordinating the United Nations response to cross-cutting challenges in the region, helping to realize synergies among related areas of work of different United Nations entities, and serving as platforms to reach out to non-United Nations stakeholders. He highlighted that the upcoming meetings of environment and youth working group of the above-mentioned coalitions would address the key environmental issues of the European region that could become an opportunity for advancing ESD and the four strands of the new strategic framework, as well as implementing the agenda.

88. The representative of Germany spoke about the activities of the national youth panel "youpaN", which was represented on different committees, involved in the national implementation structure, and contributed to further strengthening youth participation in ESD both nationally and internationally.

89. The representative of Cyprus spoke about a recently launched Cypriot initiative on climate change in Eastern Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries and the role of youth in the region, who should play a leading role in regional processes on climate change.

90. The Committee took note of the information about the relevant work of youth, including on: how youth was engaged in the process of strategic planning; recommendations about the role of youth in the Committee; and the next steps for youth involvement in the Committee's work.

91. The Chair reminded those countries that had not yet appointed a national youth representative to the Steering Committee to do so as soon as possible.

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

92. The Steering Committee was updated on recent activities to promote ESD in other international forums. A representative of the UNESCO Section for Education for Sustainable Development gave a presentation on the new framework on "Education for Sustainable Development: Towards achieving the SDGs" (ESD for 2030), starting with the results and achievements of the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development (2015–2019) and the highlights of a 2019 ESD report to the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly and the resulting General Assembly resolution 74/223 on education for sustainable development in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.<sup>13</sup>

93. The new framework ESD for 2030 had been built on the Global Action Plan's achievements, with particular emphasis on ESD's contribution to achieving all the Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, ESD could enhance understanding of

<sup>13</sup> A/RES/74/223.

sustainable development through communication and advocacy in educational settings on Sustainable Development Goals and, more importantly, could promote critical understanding and interlinkages among those Goals. ESD for 2030 had three key issues in focus: the importance of transformative action at the individual level; the importance of structural changes and the involvement of ESD; and the issue of technological advances and how it could be reflected vis-à-vis the work of ESD, i.e. how ESD could promote green transitions and technologies and prepare future entrepreneurs and workers for new technological advances that could support sustainability.

94. As a follow-up to the Global Action Plan, the implementation time frame for the new framework had been set from 2020 to 2030 and had been planned to be launched during the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (rescheduled to be held in Berlin (hybrid) from 17 to 19 May 2021, postponed from 2–4 June 2020 due to the pandemic). Based on the agreement resulting from wide consultations with partners over the past three years, there had been a call for continued efforts around the five priority action areas of the Global Action Plan, with the emphasis on advancing policy, transforming learning environments, building educators' capacities, empowering and mobilizing youth and accelerating local-level actions. One of the particular features of the new framework was the call to countries to launch their country initiatives on ESD for 2030, building on the existing efforts on ESD at the national level and to create more inclusive, multi-stakeholder initiatives that focused on creating synergies between different actors and activities carried out within a given country. The idea was to align that effort with national Sustainable Development Goal framework and plans, and to ensure that education perspectives were reflected in national sustainable development policy and action plans in education and vice versa.

95. The representative of UNESCO also spoke about the highlights of a road map for implementing ESD for 2030. On the road to the Berlin conference, there were a few planned activities, including a series of online monthly workshops to be organized until April 2021 on the key thematic areas related to ESD for 2030, with special emphasis on reflections on the pandemic, including on youth, ESD and resilience, to be used in classrooms and universities as training material. Another important event for 2020 would be an online event on launching the road map for implementing ESD for 2030, to be organized for each of the five UNESCO regions before the end of 2020.

96. Based on the road map and underlying elements, UNESCO would launch an open call for countries to start conversations with stakeholders in their countries and would provide a template for countries to fill out in order to launch the initiative at the national level and provide technical support to encourage countries to organize national-level workshops in the lead-up to preparing country initiatives and to bring together different stakeholders to share experiences and plan for collaborative work over the next ten years. UNESCO would also provide a technical guidebook and video materials in support of preparing of such workshops.

97. Regarding the monitoring of indicator 4.7.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals and ESD for 2030 reporting, the seventh global consultation on the progress of the 1974 Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms had been launched to monitor progress towards the achievement of target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goal Targets, the extent to which ESD and global citizenship education were mainstreamed at all levels in national education policies, curricula, teacher education and student assessment. The results of that monitoring would be presented at the forty-first session of the UNESCO General Conference (Paris, 9–24 November 2020) and at the high-level political forum on sustainable development (New York, 6–15 July 2021).

98. The representative of UNESCO spoke about the existing mechanism for monitoring implementation of the 1974 Recommendation as part of statutory reporting at the country level. It was highlighted that UNESCO intended to cooperate closely with the Steering Committee from the regional perspective and discuss: how the UNECE Strategy for ESD could contribute to the regional implementation of ESD for 2030; and how UNESCO and the ECE Steering Committee could work more closely together on the most challenging issue of identifying and monitoring the necessary structural changes to reorient ESD in order to embed the two aligned priority strands on the whole institution approach and quality education with the need for change. Given that all four priority strands of the new ECE

strategic framework were closely aligned with the priority areas of the ESD for 2030 framework, UNESCO was willing to work together with ECE, follow up with country initiatives, take on board challenging topics and follow up with them in the course of the coming years. Thus, around the three elements – the 1974 process, country reporting and thematic monitoring done in a quantitative and qualitative format – UNESCO would attempt to monitor progress on those issues and ECE comments and expertise on that process would be much appreciated.

99. The Chair remarked that the UNECE Strategy for ESD was a regional mechanism that was always building alliances with UNESCO to ensure that both mechanisms complemented each other to cover a wide range of ESD objectives and priorities. When the four priority issues of the new implementation framework had been identified during the Steering Committee’s strategic planning process, the main ESD priorities of UNESCO and of other concerned regional networks and initiatives had been taken into consideration to avoid overlap.

100. The representative of MIO-ESCDE updated participants on recent activities organized in the framework of the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development aimed at its implementation, involving consultations, technical support and training of trainers. From 2017 to 2019, more than 600 educators and education administrators had participated in interactive training sessions and workshops on ESD (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, the State of Palestine and Tunisia) as part of an ongoing process.

101. The Regional Workshop on Education for Sustainable Development (Heraklion, Greece, 25–26 June 2019) had attracted 80 representatives of major organizations active in the region, namely UNESCO, the Mediterranean Action Plan of UNEP (UNEP/MAP), the Union for the Mediterranean, ECE and the League of Arab States, as well as of ministries of education, ministries of environment, NGOs and research institutes from the following 20 countries: Algeria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Montenegro, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, State of Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Turkey. The report of the workshop had been presented within the Union for the Mediterranean policy frameworks and the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution (UNEP/MAP)<sup>14</sup> and would be published by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus.

102. At the local level, ESD was used as one of the major tools for management, particularly of important biosphere reserves, but also of other reserves listed by UNESCO as cultural and natural heritage linked to sustainable development. Under that umbrella, a series of six “summer universities” in cooperation with the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe (Venice) were organized in the period 2014–2020. In 2020, due to the pandemic, the summer university had been held in hybrid mode, called “Asterousia Hybrid University”, at the newly established Biosphere Reserve in Crete, Greece.<sup>15</sup>

103. The Chair highlighted the importance of the above-mentioned initiative, which was expanding the UNECE Strategy for ESD to countries outside the ECE region and was adapted to the peculiarities of the Mediterranean subregion. The Minister of Education and Culture of Cyprus was leading that initiative, which was also supported by the Union for the Mediterranean and was included in the discussion at the upcoming Ministerial Conference on Environment and Climate Action (Cairo, 4 October 2021).

104. The representative of Germany shared information about the experience with the national implementation process and monitoring. The National Platform on ESD in Germany, which was the main decision-making body, and additional bodies, convened by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, would continue its work within the same structure under the new UNESCO ESD programme for 2030. The National Action Plan on ESD, with its 130 goals and more than 300 commitments, would be continuously

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<sup>14</sup> Available at <https://medies.net/242544-2/>.

<sup>15</sup> Available at <https://medies.net/project/asterousia-hybrid-university/>.



implemented and updated as needed until 2030.<sup>16</sup> In 2020, the Federal Ministry had published the first interim review of the National Action Plan, which served as an orientation to further advance its implementation. In the review, the six ESD expert forums, including the youth forum, together with the affiliated partner networks for the different educational areas, had taken stock of their contributions and advances. Furthermore, findings were supported and supplemented by the results of the national monitoring conducted since 2015 by the Free University of Berlin. There had been significant advances regarding policies at federal State level, structural integration of ESD and training of teachers, but in particular the last two action areas would need to be further strengthened going forward.

105. The representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland informed the Committee about an event held on behalf of the ECE Steering Committee during the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC (Madrid, 2–13 December 2019). An event entitled “Facing the Future: Climate Action and International Collaboration” had been held as a round table involving expert speakers discussing road maps for effective international cooperation and sharing examples of best practice.

106. The representative of UNEP referred to the activities implemented in the framework of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in charge of reviewing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, in terms of the connection to ESD, which could contribute to the implementation of most of the Goals. The speaker highlighted that ECE member States could promote ESD in their voluntary national reviews, referring to its role in encouraging learning about Sustainable Development Goals in all settings with a view to accelerating the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and filling in its implementation gaps. Regarding UNEP activities, the representative spoke about the Earth School initiative, launched to reach out to youth and connect them with nature, especially during the lockdown. Another interesting initiative was a virtual youth consultation in Oslo with over 300 participants in preparation for the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP in February 2021, postponed to 2022 due to the pandemic.

107. The Committee took note of the presentations of the representatives of UNESCO, the Mediterranean Committee on Education for Sustainable Development, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Germany and UNEP and highlighted that collaboration between the Steering Committee and other partners was important in the implementation of the current and future ESD agenda.

## **XI. Participation of the Steering Committee in upcoming regional and international forums**

108. The members informed the Committee about the upcoming regional and international forums in 2021 and 2022 in which they planned to participate and discussed ways of promoting the Committee’s work.

109. The representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland spoke about her involvement in the Global University Network for Innovation in preparation for the 2021 UNESCO World Higher Education Conference (dates to be confirmed). The Conference aimed to reshape ideas and practices in higher education to ensure sustainable development for the planet and humanity, and ESD would be the focus for the work in terms of teaching and learning in higher education. There would be significant overlap in terms of narratives and plans with the new 2030 UNECE ESD Strategic Plan. The Chair of the Steering Committee would be invited to speak at the Conference; details would be provided later.

110. The speaker also talked about planning to prepare an event for the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC similar to one held during the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties, with the engagement of youth, and encouraged the

<sup>16</sup> Available at [www.bne-portal.de/bne/shareddocs/downloads/files/bmbf\\_nap\\_bne\\_en\\_screen\\_2.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile](http://www.bne-portal.de/bne/shareddocs/downloads/files/bmbf_nap_bne_en_screen_2.pdf?__blob=publicationFile).

members to express their interest for any support in organizing the forthcoming Conference of the Parties meeting.

111. The Chair proposed involving the Steering Committee members and discussing the possibility of organizing a side event or other event in the framework of the above-mentioned twenty-sixth session to discuss developments under the UNECE Strategy for ESD related to climate change education, and asked Ms. Daniella Tilbury to inform the Committee about the requirements for participation and contribution to the relevant event.

112. The representative of MIO-ESCDE spoke about an upcoming world conference on water, involving a session on ESD and water education. More detailed information would be presented to the Committee once available.

113. The representative of Greece, as a member of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities, spoke about an upcoming webinar organized by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning entitled “Learning Cities’ COVID-19 recovery: From research to practice” and focusing on the challenge of ESD (21 October 2020, 1–2.30 p.m. (Central European Time)). The purpose of the event was to learn from each other how to involve multiple stakeholders while addressing local problems, about the challenges for urban authorities in taking action, and to exchange examples of good practice that might inspire and inform measures in other cities.<sup>17</sup>

114. The Committee took note of the information regarding the upcoming regional and international forums.

115. The secretariat encouraged the Committee members to coordinate well in advance with the Chair and the secretariat by email in order to represent the Steering Committee and/or present its position to any upcoming regional and international forums or other events.

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

116. 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.

117. A consultant and former intern at the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe gave a presentation on the assessment of mainstreaming ESD in Cyprus, Greece, Malta and Turkey, which had been carried out on the basis of the comparative analysis of the national implementation reports submitted by those countries to the UNECE Steering Committee on ESD in the framework of monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy’s implementation, with the purpose of increasing coordination and awareness of existing ESD initiatives, activities and best-practice examples. The presenter gave a brief overview of the main findings and recommendations of the study, highlighting that the four countries had reported significant results regarding implementation of ESD across primary and secondary education and policy, curricula and teacher training.

118. The representative of the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe stated that the assessment would be extended to a further 10 countries of South-Eastern Europe, scoping the implementation of ESD, as well as the pandemic’s impact.

119. In the discussions, the role of the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe in strengthening synergies at the regional level was highlighted. It was suggested that it would be valuable to look more closely into the content of training provided to teachers and the relative impacts of the different approaches taken.

120. A representative of the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Programme informed the Committee about the Eleventh Innovative Central Asian Leadership Programme on Environment for Sustainable Development (virtual, 14–18 September 2020),

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<sup>17</sup> Available at <https://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/learning-cities/webinar-outcomes-learning-cities-covid-19-recovery-research-0>.

a youth-focused initiative supported together with partners for 11 years as a good example of cooperation, partnership and synergies.

121. The Steering Committee took note of the presentations of the representatives of the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe and the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Programme. It welcomed the information and called for the further strengthening of synergies with other organizations and processes, especially in the light of joint efforts to address the pandemic's adverse effects and collaborative efforts in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

### **XIII. Publications on education for sustainable development from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region**

122. The Chair recalled that, following the decision of the fourteenth meeting of the Steering Committee (May 2019), it had been planned to publish two publications in 2021 (now postponed to 2022), i.e. the progress report on the implementation of the fourth mandatory reporting cycle of the Strategy and good practices on the engagement of youth in ESD in the ECE region. Drafts of the outlines for the two publications were presented in information paper No. 9.

123. To have more time for discussing the proposal on the content and format of the publications, the Committee agreed to address the item during the additional two-hour online session.

### **XIV. Mainstreaming gender issues in education for sustainable development**

124. The Committee took note of the information and interventions of the representatives of the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Programme and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland about the actions and measures taken by members on integrating gender issues into ESD.

125. Countries were invited to pay special attention to that issue and to present actions and measures taken in their countries on the issue at the national and regional levels at the upcoming sixteenth meeting of the Steering Committee.

### **XV. Calendar of meetings**

126. The Steering Committee agreed to hold its sixteenth meeting on 10 and 11 May 2021, at the Palais des Nations, Geneva.

### **XVI. Other business**

127. No additional items were proposed for discussion.

### **XVII. Closure of the meeting**

128. The Chair made concluding remarks and thanked the speakers and the Committee for their constructive and efficient work. She also thanked the interpreters and officially closed the fifteenth meeting.