

## Draft Concept Note (20 April 2021)

# UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development

**Learn for Our Planet. Act for Sustainability.**

**17 - 19 May 2021**

**Held as a Virtual Conference**

### 1. Background

- Our planet and its inhabitants are under increasing pressure: Human-induced climate change, limited and recklessly exploited resources, rising temperatures and sea levels, poverty and unsustainable economic structures are just a few of the challenges governments and populations face around the world. The scientific evidence is clear. If we are to avoid catastrophic human, economic and environmental costs, global warming must be limited to 1.5°C, and 1 million species, which are threatened with extinction, must be saved.
- The Covid-19 pandemic that continues to disrupt our lives is a wake-up call on how human health is inextricably linked with the health of our planet. Therefore, addressing climate change and biodiversity collapse is securing 'the life insurance policy of humanity', according to UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay. The ongoing health crisis puts pressure on us to reflect on how we lead our lives, how we live together, how we generate our livelihoods, and how we live in the one planet we share. It also amplifies existing weaknesses and injustices in our systems like a magnifying glass. As a crisis presents a special opportunity to change course, this pandemic presents a chance to turn around from the disastrous path of climate and other emergencies by 'redesigning' our societies.
- Environmental challenges are intricately intertwined with every aspect of our societies including our social, economic and cultural systems. Therefore, redesigning our societies within the ecological boundaries of 'one planet living' will require a whole-of-society approach to transformation, which starts with the education and learning.
- In response to these challenges, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) supports efforts to equip learners with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed to contribute to a more sustainable world. UN General Assembly Resolution 72/222 (2017) reaffirmed UNESCO's role as the lead agency on ESD and recognized ESD as 'an integral element of the SDG on quality education and a key enabler of all the other SDGs', the 2019 Resolution 74/233 reinforced this by calling upon countries to enhance their ESD implementation.
- In order to further enhance ESD efforts, UNESCO launched the new framework '*Education for Sustainable Development: Towards achieving the SDGs' (ESD for 2030)*<sup>1</sup> and its roadmap for implementation at five regional Launch Events in November and December 2020. To build on

<sup>1</sup> The framework was approved by the 40th UNESCO General Conference in November 2019.

these events and follow up with concrete action and mobilize support for the new 10-year programme, UNESCO organizes a major Conference, which will be held virtually from 17-19 May 2021. The Conference is organized in cooperation with and generously supported by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research Germany.

- UNESCO will make efforts to ensure that the conference outcomes feed into other key milestones this year such as the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 26) and the 2021 United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP 15).

## 2. Overall goal

- In light of the pressing environmental issues the world is facing, the Conference will create momentum for the new framework *ESD for 2030*, which aims to build a more just and sustainable world through strengthening ESD to build education systems that support learners of all ages to be responsible and active contributors to more sustainable societies and a healthy planet.

## 3. Objectives

- Enhance awareness on sustainable development challenges, in particular the climate crisis, loss of biodiversity and other environmental challenges, and the crucial role of education as a key enabler for the successful achievement of the SDGs.
- Create momentum for the new global framework *ESD for 2030* for the period of 2020-2030 and its roadmap for implementation, including:
  - Ensure policy commitment to ESD through a Berlin *Declaration* which is expected to include a call for urgent action to accelerate sustainability and climate action through education;
  - Foster stakeholder commitments to *ESD for 2030*, including country initiatives for *ESD for 2030*;
  - Expand and reinforce partnerships and networking opportunities for ESD.

## 4. Outcomes

- Global awareness about ESD is increased. The participants, including the representatives of Member States, acknowledge the importance of ESD and increase their efforts in their professional capacities to address pressing global challenges, in particular climate change and loss of biodiversity.
- Implementation of the new global framework *ESD for 2030* is successfully accelerated by concrete action;
  - The Berlin Declaration is adopted;
  - Concrete commitments, including for country initiatives on *ESD for 2030*, are made and/or strengthened further;
  - A strong basis for the *ESD for 2030* Global Network of ESD policy-makers and stakeholders is established.

## 5. Format

The Conference will be held virtually on a participatory online platform. The format of the virtual Conference will include interactive plenaries for debate and dialogue and concurrent sessions for in-depth discussion, online-workshops, virtual exhibitions and digital networking opportunities. Interaction will be key to the whole programme in order to provide a learning experience for all.

## 6. Programme elements

Please find the draft programme continuously updated on the conference website

## 7. Date and place

17 – 19 May 2020, online, from a studio at Berlin Congress Center

## 8. Participants

Approximately 2500 stakeholders from all regions of the world especially policy-makers working in education and other areas related to sustainable development; ESD practitioners, NGOs, experts and members of the development community and the private sector will also participate. All UNESCO Member States will be invited to nominate a delegation to represent them at the Conference.

## 9. Working languages

English, French, Spanish, Arabic and German with simultaneous interpretation available for all plenary sessions and some concurrent sessions. Russian and Chinese in some plenaries. See the conference programme for details.

## 10. Organizers and Partners

The conference is organized by UNESCO in cooperation with and generously supported by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research of Germany, and with the German Commission for UNESCO as advisory partner.

## 11. Contact

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More detailed information is being made available on the Conference website:

<https://en.unesco.org/events/ESDfor2030>

ESD for 2030 framework: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000370215.locale=en>

ESD for 2030 Roadmap: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374802>