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Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

During the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) (2005-2014), the United Nations University (UNU) promoted activities for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) by contributing to discussions and processes in collaboration with UNESCO and other international organizations and national governments at the international level and cooperating with local governments, higher education institutions, schools, NGOs, companies and others at the local level.

The Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development (RCE) is advocated by the UNU as a means to realize the establishment of the Global Learning Space for Sustainable Development at the local level. As of July 2014, 129 RCEs around the world are officially acknowledged as a place of dialogue to promote the cooperation and collaboration between local ESD practitioners that include higher education institutions, NGOs, local governments, private sector and others. The Promotion of Sustainability in Postgraduate Education and Research Network (ProSPER.NET), launched in 2008, promotes the strengthening of the ESD activities at higher educational institutions by, among others, introducing sustainability in graduate school courses and programs, and 32 graduate schools are among its members as of July 2014. In Africa, a Masters-level program of education is offered at 8 African universities to educate next-generation experts to work on the issues of sustainable

development in collaboration with higher education institutions, international organizations and others in Japan, Africa and northern Europe. Moreover, through the activities at the Global Environment Outreach Centre (GEOC), the provision of information on ESD to civil societies domestic and abroad and the formation of partnerships for building sustainable societies that includes ESD are promoted.

At the “UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development” held from 10 to 12 November 2014, the GEOC organized a side event titled “Connecting Local Stakeholders through ESD” (See the back side). Other than the above, the UNU held a side event to the World Conference on ESD, the “Global RCE Conference” (from 4 to 7 November in Okayama City), and the “International Conference on Higher Education for Sustainable Development: Higher Education beyond 2014” (9 November in Nagoya City) to contribute to the development and expansion of the ESD activities.



The Global Action Programme (GAP) on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which is the successor program for the next decade, is implemented starting from 2015 with UNESCO taking the lead. The program focuses on five priority action areas: Advancing policy; priority action areas: Advancing policy; Integrating sustainability practices into education and training environments (whole-institution approaches); Increasing the capacity of educators and trainers; Empowering and mobilizing youth; and Encouraging local communities and municipal authorities to develop community-based ESD programmes.

The UNU, as a think tank that conducts research that directly leads to policy, plans to contribute to the advancement of policy, and at the same time, promote local-level ESD activities and integration of sustainability practices into the education environment through RCE and ProSPER.NET activities so as to contribute to the ESD activities all over the world in 2015 and beyond.

GEOC Global Environment Outreach Centre

Global Environment Outreach Centre (GEOC), a joint programme between the Ministry of the Environment of Japan and UNU, contributes to improving communications and outreach between stakeholders through establishing partnership in order to realize a sustainable society.

“Connecting Local Stakeholders through ESD”

Side Event of the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development

At the “UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development” held in Nagoya in November 2014, the UNU-IAS, jointly with the Ministry of the Environment and the GEOC, held the “Connecting Local Stakeholders through ESD,” as a side event. ESD-related activities and collaboration are expected in various local places such as zoos, museums, and other social educational facilities, and also, forests and natural parks for the further development of the ESD. The purpose of this past event was to present case examples to promote future collaboration among local stakeholders based on the activities of the RCE promoted by the UNU and those of the Environmental Partnership Office (EPO) by the Ministry of the Environment and to discuss the issues involved. About 70 individuals participated in the event, including NGO personnel, local government officials and educators.

Mr. Tsunao Watanabe (Senior Programme Coordinator, UNU-IAS) in his opening remarks expressed his hope that the conference would trigger new activities and collaboration and that various connections would help ESD take root in the society and develop further.



Mr. Yukihiro Oikawa (Researcher, Miyagi University of Education) who served as the coordinator of the conference

explained the purpose of the conference and showcased the RCE promoted by the UNU, the *UNESCO Associated Schools* by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology and the UNESCO, and *+ESD Project* by the Ministry of the Environment as some of the “connecting” schemes Japan has worked on. He also pointed out the importance of how these frameworks are used at the local level.

Subsequently, topics were provided by resource persons. **Dr. Yoshiyuki Nagata** (Professor, Department of Education, University of the Sacred Heart) indicated that it is essential for the ESD to encourage and support coordinated and endogenous development that suits local culture, practices and needs, presenting as an example the “Bringing Back Smiles Project,” a project to support the reconstruction of Rikuzentakata City conducted jointly by a university, a company, the UNESCO, and an NPO. **Dr. Abel Barasa Atiti** (Research Fellow, UNU-IAS) discussed the past



activities and achievements of the RCE and explained that local communities can address their challenges and make a positive change through the multi-stakeholder ESD activities.

In the presentation of case examples, **Dr. Chiemi Saito** (Professor, Environmental Education Center, Miyagi University of Education) discussed the promotion of ESD in universities and collaboration with social educational organizations and others in the local community. She explained that it is important to cooperate in a manner that the goal is shared and the activities are complementary to each other, based on the 7-year-long partnership with a zoo. **Mr. Toshikatsu Ouchi** (Director, Sendai Yagiyama Zoological Park) said that zoos offer the opportunity to promote a wider view because they encourage visitors to experience various things with their five senses, and moreover, he said that collaboration between zoos and schools would enable diverse and long-lasting educational activities, showing environmental education practices that take advantage of the characteristics of the two facilities. **Mr. Koji Kobayashi** (General Manager, Miyagi Environmental Life Outreach Network) discussed environmental education program development projects by NPOs and pointed out that it is essential for the promotion of

local-level ESD to develop educational materials utilizing local characteristics, establish a network that serves as a platform to promote ESD, develop human resources and continue the activities on a long-term basis. **Mr. Kyoji Takubo** (Artist), who has been active in scenic art in which he works to activate the existing landscape such as mountains, rivers and buildings, discussed his restoration of a chapel in Normandy, France, and the activities to make an open space in Rikuzentakata City to explain the creation of artwork together with local citizens and the use of that particular place. He indicated that it is important in building a sustainable future to observe the region with due consideration of its climate, culture and history. **Mr. Takeharu Shumiya** (General Director of Conservation Research Division, the Nature Conservation Society of Japan) explained the collaboration of the stakeholders in the management and the biodiversity conservation project of the Aya Biosphere Reserve and said that the expansion of ESD activities is expected through the implementation of forest environmental education, collaboration with UNESCO Associated Schools, and moreover, local conservation and management plans to be developed in the future. **Ms. Tomoko Hoshino** (Executive Director, Environmental Partnership Council) talked about the environmental education model program development projects by the EPO and expressed her expectation for the contribution made by the EPO and other bridge-builders to connect local stakeholders for the further activation and capacity development of ESD.

The panel discussion centered around the challenges and prospects of the collaboration of local stakeholders after the introduction of the Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD, which is the successor to the Decade of ESD. It was pointed out that the use of coordinators to connect social educational facilities and schools; participation, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and creating shared value (CSV) by the corporate sector; effective use of local resources (human resources, information); collaboration between local persons concerned and external resources; and finding and sharing of local best practices will be increasingly important. At the end of the discussion it was concluded that it is essential for various stakeholders to strengthen the connection between persons, organizations and pieces of information and to continually conduct proactive and endogenous activities for the further development of the ESD.

