



4th International Conference on Environmental Education

Environmental Education towards a Sustainable Future -
Partners for the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development



ICEE

24-28 November, 2007 | Centre for Environment Education | Ahmedabad | India

The Ahmedabad Declaration 2007: A Call to Action

Education for life: life through education

28th November 2007

This declaration was developed from the 24th to the 28th of November 2007. The drafting process involved more than 1,200 participants from 80 countries at the Fourth International Conference on Environmental Education. The conference was sponsored by UNESCO, UNEP and the Government of India and was hosted by the Centre for Environment Education at Ahmedabad, India. Since the first international conference was held in Tbilisi, Georgia, in 1977, conferences have been held every ten years, in Moscow in 1987 and in Thessaloniki, Greece, in 1997. This declaration was drafted in the context of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.

Our vision is a world in which our work and lifestyles contribute to the well-being of all life on Earth. We believe that through education, human lifestyles can be achieved that support ecological integrity, economic and social justice, sustainable livelihoods and respect for all life. Through education we can learn to prevent and resolve conflicts, respect cultural diversity, create a caring society and live in peace. We can learn from indigenous and traditional patterns of living that respect and honour the Earth and its life-support systems and we can adapt this wisdom to our fast-changing world. We can make individual, community, national and even global choices with due consideration for the collective good. Individuals including youth, civil society, governments, businesses, funding partners and other institutions can appreciate that their daily actions can shape a viable future of which all can be proud.

Ever-increasing human production and consumption is rapidly undermining the Earth's life-support systems and the potential for all life to flourish. Assumptions about what constitutes an acceptable quality of life for some, often means deprivation for others. The gap between rich and poor is widening. The climate crisis, loss of biodiversity, increasing health risks and poverty are indicators of development models and lifestyles that are unsustainable. Alternative models and visions for a sustainable future do exist and urgent action is needed to make them a reality. Human rights, gender equity, social justice and a healthy environment must become global imperatives. Education for Sustainable Development is essential to making this transformation.

Mahatma Gandhi said, "Let my life be my message." The example we set is all important. Through our actions, we add substance and vigour to the quest for sustainable living. With creativity and imagination we need to re-think and change the values we live by, the choices we make, and the actions we take.

We must reconsider our tools, methods and approaches, our politics and economics, our relationships and partnerships, and the very foundations and purpose of education and how it relates to the lives we lead. In making our choices we draw on, and are inspired by, much work that has gone before us, including the Earth Charter and the Millennium Development Goals.

Environmental Education processes support and champion Education for Sustainable Development. Such education processes must be relevant, responsive and accountable. Research is encouraged to provide additional rigour and credibility and to identify increasingly effective methods of learning and sharing knowledge.

We are all learners as well as teachers. Education for Sustainable Development encourages a shift from viewing education as a delivery mechanism to a lifelong, holistic and inclusive process. We pledge to build partnerships and share our diverse experiences and collective knowledge to refine the vision of sustainability while continually expanding its practice.

In a world with increasing capabilities to network, we embrace our responsibilities and commit ourselves to carry forward the recommendations from this conference. The United Nations system and governments worldwide need to support Environmental Education and develop sound Education for Sustainable Development policy frameworks and commit to their implementation.

We urge all people to join us in pursuing the principles of sustainability with humility, inclusivity, integrity and a strong sense of humanity. We move forward from Ahmedabad in a spirit of hope, enthusiasm and commitment to action.