

ESD Declaration from the Japanese Business Community

Forward

Various initiatives have unfolded in the lead up to the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in November 2014, the final year of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). In Japan as in other countries, corporations' role in ESD has taken on increasing relevance with the spread of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and growing expectations of corporations' contribution to society.

Against this backdrop, in April 2014, the ESD Corporate Leadership Forum was created as an informal setting where companies and organizations interested in ESD—primarily corporate members of the Japan Council on the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD-J), the leading advocate of ESD in Japan's private sector during the Decade—could gather and network. Continually updated with the latest information by ESD-J, the Forum has held several meetings aimed at forging bonds between members through exchange and the sharing of practices, with the goal of preparing the group to effectively communicate the status of ESD in Japanese business at the World Conference.

The "ESD Declaration from the Japanese Business Community" was formulated by active members of the Forum in order to clearly define what ESD means to corporations in Japan, and to provide a set of action guidelines for integrating ESD into business practices. This declaration encourages voluntary action by each company and organization. It also expresses, in this final year of DESD, our collective intent to remain engaged and continue working together to further ESD.

1. Basic Awareness

- (1) To make the sustainable development vision a reality, voluntary action by all organizations and individuals, based on a shared awareness, is essential. Since people are the driving force of any organization, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) that is targeted to all people will be the key to success.
- (2) As corporations' impact on society and the environment have grown, so too have calls for companies to behave responsibly and take proactive action on sustainable development. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has spread worldwide, as a shared awareness and in practice, in response to these calls.
- (3) Corporations have used their resources, such as technologies, expertise, and human resources, to provide solutions to various problems. They will continue to be expected to spur social change for sustainable development in partnership with an array of stakeholders. They can do this by driving innovation and lifestyle changes through their core business of providing products and services.
- (4) ESD is often viewed solely within the framework of formal education, but a variety of forms of social education and lifelong learning are also critical. As the role of business in advancing sustainable development takes on greater importance, "corporations and ESD" becomes an especially important theme.
- (5) Businesses share a deep connection with the communities where they operate, and are also connected to the wider world. It is therefore vital that companies act with a constant awareness of both the local and global perspectives. This applies to their engagement in ESD as well.
- (6) This declaration states the basic stance of corporations as they relate to ESD. Companies that endorse this declaration commit to maintaining this basic awareness, and to devoting, on a voluntary basis, their creative powers toward advancing ESD in accordance with the action guidelines below.

2. Action Guidelines

- (1) Devote resources to educating and fostering human resources within the company so that these people can make contributions to sustainable development through the company's various business segments, such as products and services. By doing so, integrate the concept of sustainable development into the company's business activities.
- (2) Actively support the practice of ESD in formal education and lifelong learning as well, through any of a variety of community improvement activities that draw on the company's unique resources. These activities should target children, young adults, ordinary citizens, and others with potential for future leadership.
- (3) Place a high value on relationships with local communities. Foster sustainability advocates by collaborating, communicating, and studying with a wide spectrum of stakeholders to solve local issues.
- (4) Take a global view and conduct and promote ESD to solve global-level issues. Promote ESD and implement capacity building activities and other efforts with overseas stakeholders.
- (5) Strive to become an ESD leader in one's industry, while also actively disseminating information and communicating with a variety of stakeholders.
- (6) Partner with stakeholders in Japan and overseas who have similar aspirations. Actively engage in dialogue and collaboration especially with civil society organizations, such as NPOs and NGOs.

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Members of the ESD Corporate Leadership Forum

Maeda Corporation

MS&AD Insurance Group

Sompo Japan
Nipponkoa
Environment
Foundation

Sompo Japan Nipponkoa

日本商工会議所
The Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry

SuMi TRUST
SUMITOMO MITSUI TRUST BANK

東京商工会議所
The Tokyo Chamber of Commerce and Industry

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