

The Future We Create: An interdisciplinary roundtable discussion on the role of education
and learning toward a sustainable future

20 Jun 2012, 19:00-20:30 | RioCentro, Room T-10

United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development
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Organized by
Soka Gakkai International

Co-sponsored by
Centre for Environment Education
CSD Education Caucus
Human Rights Education Associates
Inter Press Service

Background

The Earth Summit in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro adopted Agenda 21, a comprehensive plan of action or a roadmap for sustainable development. It recognized education in all its forms including both formal and non-formal education as a key instrument for achieving a sustainable future. It also articulated education's interdisciplinary nature and that is linked to virtually all areas in Agenda 21.

Since then, there have been efforts made to advance the education agenda including the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014). Meanwhile, there is a concern that education, which was well-defined, broadly-linked and highly-inspired in Rio, has been scaled down and can often be viewed as nothing more than schooling.

The UN Conference on Sustainable Development will be convened in June 2012 with the objective of securing renewed political commitment for sustainable development, assessing the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development, and addressing new and emerging challenges and with the two themes: a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication and the institutional framework for sustainable development.

Article 36 of Agenda 21 reads: "Education is critical for promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of the people to address environment and development issues." Therefore, it is clear that education must play a vital role for the objective and the themes set forth for the forthcoming UNCSD.

Education plays a vital role not only in sustainable development but in many other thematic areas as well. For instance, the General Assembly adopted the UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (A/RES/66/137) in 2011. This year marks the tenth anniversary of the UN Study on Disarmament and Non-proliferation Education.

Objective

The roundtable will bring together participants from various areas of work including

sustainable development, human rights, disarmament, women, children, youth, interreligious cooperation, and more where education plays a vital role. It will also facilitate participation by different sectors including the Major Groups, UN organizations, governments, media and others to ensure diverse views, experiences and insights to be exchanged.

It will then explore ideas and recommendations with regard to the role of education and learning for the objective and themes of Rio+20 and further toward a sustainable future.

Event details

Below is a set of questions to be explored:

- What is education? What is learning?
- What roles do education and learning play in your area of work? How effective?
- What are the challenges in advancing education agenda?
- Based on your experiences and knowledge and insights that you have gained, what can you suggest in terms of the role of education for sustainable development, particularly for the objective and themes of Rio+20?
- What can you suggest in terms of the follow-up of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development?
- What can you suggest in terms of a potential partnership among us from various areas and various sectors by focusing on education and learning?

It will begin with the six speakers from diverse backgrounds listed below. In order to secure time for open discussion and questions and answers, each speaker will be asked to make a presentation within eight minutes. Each speaker will be asked to discuss on the specific topics and questions which have been prepared based on her or his expertise and area of work to ensure various aspects of education are covered.

Below is the draft agenda:

- 19:00-19:10 Welcome, background, and framework for discussion by moderator
- 19:10-19:20* Pam Puntenney, Co-chair, CSD Education Caucus
- A historical overview of the education agenda in the UN processes for sustainable development
 - Ideas for a more sustainable future, a well-prepared society
- 19:20-19:30* Kartikeya Sarabhai, Director, Centre for Environment Education
- Evaluation of the education agenda in the UN processes for sustainable development, particularly the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014), identifying both successes and challenges
 - Ideas for actions to follow the Decade
- 19:30-19:40* Frank Elbers, Executive Director, Human Rights Education Associates
- Evaluation of the education agenda in the UN processes for human rights, particularly the UN Decade of Human Rights Education (1995-2004) to the World Programme for Human Rights Education, identifying both successes and challenges
 - Insights and recommendations for advancing the education agenda in the area of sustainable development

- 19:40-19:50* Sergio Duarte, Former UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs
- Evaluation of the education agenda in the UN processes for disarmament, including the UN Study on Disarmament and Non-proliferation Education, which marks the tenth anniversary this year
 - Evaluation of the civil society participation and engagement in disarmament issues, including the Nuclear Freeze Movement, campaigns against landmines and cluster munitions
 - Insights and recommendations for advancing the education agenda in the area of sustainable development
- 19:50-20:00* Akira Tanaka, Director, Amazon Ecological Conservation Center, Brazil SGI
- An important part of Amazon Center's work is community education programs. Could you share with us what you have learned through the programs, particularly the qualities that you have learned as critical for an effective education activity?
- 20:00-20:10* Joaquin Costanzo, Regional Director, Inter Press Service Latin America
- Media is an important medium for non-formal education. However, the role of media is often brought up at the UN and in NGO activities as an area for improvement. Could you give us insight and recommendations for how media can effectively advance the education agenda.
- 20:10-20:25 Open discussion
- 20:25-20:30 Wrap-up and closing

*includes 8 minutes for presentations and 2 minutes for moderator's introduction.

Expected outcome

The discussion will be summarized and made available to the participants of Rio+20 as a contribution to the conference objective and themes.