



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

# Executive Board

Two hundred and sixth session

## 206 EX/6.II

PARIS, 20 February 2019  
Original: English

Item 6 of the provisional agenda

### SDG 4 – EDUCATION 2030

#### PART II

#### EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BEYOND 2019

##### SUMMARY

Pursuant to 204 EX/Decision 28, the Director-General submits a proposal for a draft framework, entitled Education for Sustainable Development: Towards achieving the SDGs (ESD for 2030), as a ten-year follow-up to the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development (2015-2019).

The financial and administrative implications of this document are covered in paragraph 14.

Action expected of the Executive Board: proposed decision in paragraph 15.



July 2019/03/24

## INTRODUCTION

1. UNESCO has been the lead United Nations agency on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) since the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014). The Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD, which started in 2015 with the objective of scaling up action on ESD, will come to an end in 2019. Consequently, by 204 EX/Decision 28, the Executive Board requested the Director-General to develop a proposal for a draft framework for the implementation of ESD beyond 2019, with a view to submitting it to the 40th session of the General Conference for approval and the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly for acknowledgment.

2. The present document provides a concise overview of the proposed framework, entitled *Education for Sustainable Development: Towards achieving the SDGs (ESD for 2030)*, and covers the period 2020-2030, including its rationale and its implementation modalities. The full text of “ESD for 2030” is available in the annex. It was developed through broad consultations with various stakeholders from 2016 to 2018. This includes the annual reviews of the implementation of the GAP; four brainstorming symposia with more than 250 experts and stakeholders held around the world; a consultation meeting with GAP Key Partners in April 2018 in Costa Rica; a Technical Consultation Meeting with over 270 government representatives and experts from 116 Member States in July 2018 in Bangkok, Thailand; consultations with United Nations agencies and other international players, as well as an online public consultation with a wide range of stakeholders.

3. ESD for 2030 builds upon the lessons learned and experiences of the current phase of the GAP (2015-2019). The results of the GAP Key Partner Survey (2015-2018), available on UNESCO’s website,<sup>1</sup> confirm that the programme made good progress, exceeding the targets for 2019 in four out of its five Priority Action Areas (policy, education and training, educators and communities). The GAP Key Partner Network of 95 stakeholders has served as a forum for peer exchange and support to make this possible. Notably, it is projected that through this network 26 million learners in formal and non-formal settings have been exposed to ESD curricula and special projects designed to instil knowledge and inspire action in their communities. Furthermore, it is estimated that partners have supported the training of two million educators on ESD and adapted material and resources to meet their needs.

4. However, the need for more inter-linkages between partners working for different Priority Action Areas has been identified, particularly through the establishment of regional networks for more leverage. The review of GAP mid-term implementation in 2017 revealed that there had been insufficient visibility of the engagement made by governments. There is also a growing demand for fundraising, in particular to invest in research, and monitoring and evaluation of ESD activities.

### Goal of ESD for 2030

5. In response to the increased importance placed on ESD as an integral element of SDG 4 and a key enabler of all the other SDGs, as also recognized by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 72/222, the overall objective of ESD for 2030 is to build a more just and sustainable world through the achievement of the 17 SDGs. ESD for 2030 therefore proposes to strengthen ESD’s contribution to all SDGs, with particular focus on helping the SDG 4 – Education 2030 agenda place greater emphasis on the contribution of learning content to the survival and prosperity of humanity.

### ESD for 2030 approach

6. ESD for 2030 is to be implemented as an integral part of UNESCO’s contribution to achieving the SDGs, notably SDG4-Education 2030, in full coherence with its Programme and Budget. The following key notions were identified in the consultations process as the basis for ESD for 2030:

<sup>1</sup> Available at: <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development>

7. **Transformative action:** ESD has to pay more attention to each learner's individual transformation processes and how they happen. First, transformation necessitates a certain level of disruption together with courage and determination. Second, there are stages of transformation for the individual: with the acquisition of knowledge, learners become aware of certain realities; with critical analysis, they begin to understand the complexities of the realities; experiential exposure can lead to an empathic connection to realities; when the realities are relevant to one's life and through tipping moments, compassion and solidarity are developed. This understanding of transformation involves not only formal, but also non-formal and informal education; both cognitive and socio-emotional learning; and community and citizenship education.

8. **Structural changes:** There is a need for ESD to pay more attention to the deep structural causes of unsustainable development, in particular the relationship between economic growth and sustainable development. ESD should promote development as a balancing act, which implies adapting to changes while respecting the values of conservation, sufficiency, moderation and solidarity. A structural view is also required to address ESD in contexts of extreme poverty or other challenging survival situations (e.g. conflict or refugee situations), where the full complexity of the concept of sustainable development does not immediately resonate with people trying to survive on a daily basis. In these contexts, ESD should consider people's specific living conditions and provide them with skills to ensure their livelihood. Above all, it should ensure human dignity and the right to live decently.

9. **The technological future:** Technological advances may provide solutions to some of the "old" sustainability problems, but some ESD efforts to change people's behaviour may no longer be relevant. However, the technological solutions themselves may bring new challenges or simply create an illusion of having solved the original problems. ESD and its emphasis on critical thinking is therefore becoming ever more important. For example, with sensor-equipped buildings, the behaviour of switching off lights to save energy may become extinct, but the value of saving energy should remain relevant. New opportunities will also open up for ESD, such as accelerating the transition to green technologies by equipping people with the required green skills. Orienting ESD to support the achievement of the SDGs will provide the opportunity for the ESD community to work more closely with key technology stakeholders, namely business, manufacturing and enterprise sectors.

### Implementation framework

10. **Supporting the SDGs:** While ESD contributes to all SDGs, it is especially relevant for the advancement of SDG 4 – Education 2030 and Target 4.7. ESD will continue to focus on the relevance of education and training to instil knowledge and value to address shared sustainable development challenges. It can, furthermore, raise critical questions on the inter-linkages between and among all the SDGs and support the growing demand for more and better communication and advocacy on the SDGs, including through the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee.

11. **Structures:** The main structural components of the current phase of the GAP will be maintained with some adjustments for ESD for 2030. First, the five Priority Action Areas (policy; education and training; educators; youth; and communities) remain relevant. Second, the five Partner Networks will be merged into one inclusive Network of Partners, in order to facilitate cross-sectorial work, and programme support should be provided for activities involving different groups of Partners across the network. Finally, the UNESCO-Japan Prize for ESD also deserves continued support as an important advocacy tool.

12. **Activities by Member States:** To meet the ambitious agenda set by the SDGs, enhanced efforts in all five Priority Action Areas will be required. For Priority Action Area 1 on **policy**, ESD must be integrated into international and national policies related to education and sustainable development. For Priority Action Area 2 on **education and training**, the whole-institution approach should be strengthened with emphasis on the necessity for education institutions and communities to work together. For Priority Action Area 3 on **educators**, more opportunities are needed for

educators to increase their capacities as facilitators of learning that leads to transformation. For Priority Action Area 4 on **youth**, the focus needs to be on ensuring young people's engagement as one of the key change actors in addressing sustainability challenges. Finally, Priority Action Area 5 on **communities** should be implemented as a nodal area and linked closely to all others, as it is the community that is the locus of action for sustainable development. To implement *ESD for 2030*, Member States are invited to mobilize stakeholders and facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships and networks. There should also be greater advocacy and communication efforts made to highlight the crucial role of ESD in achieving the SDGs.

13. **Activities by UNESCO:** UNESCO will set up a programme to support nationwide ESD initiatives by providing normative guidelines and country-level support. It will also support the inclusive Network of Partners by providing regular platforms to meet, paying special attention to governments, donors and the sustainable development community. Furthermore, UNESCO will enhance communication and advocacy on achieving the SDGs through ESD and will monitor the scaling up of actions, implementation of specific projects and initiatives, and the implementation of the programme as a whole. Finally, UNESCO will provide evidence-informed guidance on issues that are key for the future of ESD.

### Financial and administrative implications

14. UNESCO will seek to implement ESD for 2030 within the provisions of UNESCO's regular programme and budget. In addition, UNESCO will seek to increase and diversify extrabudgetary funds in order to support the operational implementation of ESD for 2030, building on the strong partnerships it has already developed throughout the current phase of the GAP. Member States are therefore strongly encouraged to make voluntary contributions to ensure ESD for 2030's full implementation.

15. The Executive Board may wish to adopt a decision as follows:

The Executive Board,

1. Having examined document 206 EX/6.II,
2. Recalling 204 EX/Decision 28,
3. Reaffirms the importance of education for sustainable development (ESD) as a key enabler of all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and notes with appreciation the work undertaken by UNESCO through the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development (2015-2019);
4. Endorses the draft framework for the implementation of Education for Sustainable Development beyond 2019 contained in the annex to document 206 EX/6.II, entitled Education for Sustainable Development: Towards achieving the SDGs (ESD for 2030);
5. Requests the Director-General to:
  - (a) submit the ESD for 2030 draft framework to the 40th session of the General Conference for its approval, and to the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly for its acknowledgement;
  - (b) mobilize all UNESCO programme sectors and networks and collaborate with relevant United Nations agencies and partners to ensure the full implementation of ESD for 2030;
6. Invites Member States to support the acknowledgement of ESD for 2030 at the United Nations General Assembly and to support its implementation through extrabudgetary funding.



## ANNEX

### Education for Sustainable Development: Towards achieving the SDGs (ESD for 2030)

*A draft framework for the implementation of Education for Sustainable Development beyond 2019*

#### 1. Why this framework?

- 1.1 In 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro recognized, in its framework for action Agenda 21, the critical role that education can play in the transition to sustainable development. In 2002, the United Nations General Assembly declared the ten years from 2005 to 2014 to be the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), calling on governments to integrate the principles of sustainability into their educational strategies and action plans. UNESCO, which had been assigned the role of task manager for Chapter 36 on education of Agenda 21, became the UN-designated lead agency.
- 1.2 In 2014, the DESD came to an end and, as the follow up, UNESCO launched<sup>1</sup> the Global Action Programme (GAP) on Education for Sustainable Development for an initial phase of five years (2015-2019) at the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development held in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan. At the same time, the Aichi-Nagoya Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development was adopted recognizing ESD's role in empowering learners and the societies they live in.<sup>2</sup> To build on the efforts made by the DESD for advocacy and awareness-raising, the GAP, acknowledged by the United Nations General Assembly<sup>3</sup> as the official follow-up to the DESD, focused on the scaling up of actions on the ground. Advancing policy, transforming learning and training environments, building capacities of educators and trainers, mobilizing youth, and accelerating sustainable solutions at local level were identified as the five Priority Action Areas for implementation.
- 1.3 The five-year cycle of the GAP is due to end in 2019, and in order to build a post-GAP position that contributes to Agenda 2030 thereafter, this framework was being prepared.

#### 2. How this framework has been prepared

- 2.1 **Review of the GAP:** The review of GAP implementation, covering the period 2015 to 2018<sup>4</sup>, revealed that good progress was being made in the implementation of the targeted objectives set by the Key GAP Partners.<sup>5</sup> In the additional consultation held with Key GAP Partners and

<sup>1</sup> As endorsed by the 37th session of the UNESCO General Conference (37 C/Resolution 12).

<sup>2</sup> The Aichi-Nagoya Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development states ESD can empower learners to transform themselves and the society they live in by developing knowledge, skills, attitudes, competencies and values required for addressing global citizenship and local contextual challenges of the present and the future, such as critical and systemic thinking, analytical problem-solving, creativity, working collaboratively and making decisions in the face of uncertainty, and understanding the interconnectedness of global challenges and responsibilities emanating from such awareness.

<sup>3</sup> Resolution A/RES/69/211.

<sup>4</sup> The final evaluation of the GAP implementation will be carried out by the end of 2019. If the result of the final evaluation was to be fully integrated into the post-GAP framework, there would be a gap of about one year before the new post-GAP framework is launched, which requires institutional processes involving the Governing Bodies of UNESCO and the United Nations. In order to avoid the break in implementation, and also as the results of the mid-term review showed a progress trend not expected to be reversed in any way, the process to prepare this post-GAP position has been advanced. This advanced process is supported by 204 EX/Decision 28 of UNESCO's Executive Board, which calls for 'seamless follow-up to the Global Action Programme and continued UNESCO leadership in ESD beyond 2019'.

<sup>5</sup> 2018 GAP survey: <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development> According to the GAP Key Partner Survey (2015-2018), it is estimated that the Partners of GAP (and their cascaded networks of partners) supported over 900 strategic policy developments, while more than 1,400 programmes were developed and implemented to support countries' policy development on ESD. Around 151,000 schools and 26 million learners were estimated to have been supported by the Partners along with 2 million educators and 48,400 teacher training institutions. The Partners also supported around 3.4 million youth leaders and trained around 762,000 as trainers.

others, however, the need for more inter-linkages between partners working for different Priority Action Areas was voiced. In the internal review of the mid-term implementation, the insufficient visibility of the engagement made by governments was also pointed out.

- 2.2 **Symposium series:** In order to identify issues and trends that need to be considered and updated in the post-GAP framework, UNESCO planned and organized four brainstorming symposia with more than 250 experts and stakeholders involved. They were held in Brazil, Germany, Japan and South Africa from 2016 to 2018, and comprised of interviews and visits to concrete actors and their practices on the ground. The discussions focused on what made people living under different contexts act in favour of sustainable development and provided important insights into the observations described in the Required Reflections part of this framework.
- 2.3 **Consultation process:** Based on the observations drawn from the above processes and several internal reviews of UNESCO's ongoing ESD activities, UNESCO prepared a zero draft of this framework. The first version was shared with and reviewed by GAP Key Partners during a meeting organized by UNESCO in April 2018 in San Jose, Costa Rica. The second version was submitted to a Technical Consultation Meeting with government representatives and experts from 116 Member States, held in July 2018 in Bangkok, Thailand. A wider online consultation with United Nations agencies and other international bodies as well as an online public consultation with a wide range of stakeholders were carried out up until the end of 2018.

### 3. Key contexts

- 3.1 **DESD and the GAP:** The DESD aimed at integrating the principles and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning. Its main contribution was awareness-raising, which helped generate interesting practices and projects. The evaluation of the DESD recommended that among others, institutional support is needed in order to scale up and maintain these momentous initiatives.
- 3.2 The GAP (2015-2019) filled these shortcomings. Actors working on policy, education and training institutions, educators, youth and local authorities were identified as Key Partners to work in one of the five Priority Action Areas – advancing policy, transforming learning and training environments, building capacities of educators and trainers, empowering and mobilizing youth, and accelerating sustainable solutions at local level. Their sectoral networking was supported by the five Partner Networks set up for the five areas.
- 3.3 The mid-term review of GAP implementation in 2017 reported on the good progress that the Key Partners were making in meeting their scaling-up targets. The networking mechanism was found to be useful for mutual learning, but less so for raising funds and developing joint projects. Lessons learned also include that networking efforts must be combined with concrete programme activities that bring Partners together, and that Partners of different sectors should work more collaboratively across the Priority Action Areas.
- 3.4 Furthermore, although policy development has been one of the Priority Action Areas and policy-makers have been active in the implementation of GAP through their participation in the Partner Network for policy development, the leadership assumed by governments was not visibly demonstrated in the current phase of GAP implementation. This was partly due to the fact that global monitoring has focused mainly on the totality of actions scaled up on the ground, which are not necessarily categorized by the type of actors.
- 3.5 This is regrettable as data actually show that governments are indeed making increasing efforts to reflect sustainability principles in the policy arena. According to a survey UNESCO

---

Finally, it is projected that over 5,600 civil society organizations conducted ESD activities and that over 2,300 local ESD activities were established.

conducted in 2016<sup>6</sup>, for example, over 91% of the responding Member States reported on the increase of their emphasis on ESD in the policy arena. In the post-GAP framework, therefore, there has to be a special window for monitoring and reporting on the leadership taken by government actors.

- 3.6 **SDGs:** In 2015, the global community launched 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) addressing issues related to poverty, hunger, health, education, energy, work, industry, inequalities, cities, consumption, climate, ocean life, ecosystems, peace and partnership. Achieving these goals requires a profound transformation in the way we live, think and act; and the role of education in achieving all of the 17 SDGs is given heightened emphasis.
- 3.7 ESD has advocated for the sustainability principle to be reflected in education policy, curricula, training and practice as a means to empower individuals to take informed decisions. However, some further critical reflection is needed around the fact that, despite its advocacy on a holistic and system-wide approach, when it comes to implementation, ESD tends to be treated as a thematic topic. This has to change and ESD has to outgrow its topical understanding and work more proactively at the systemic level as a part of SDG 4 on education, and Target 4.7 in particular.
- 3.8 ESD and Global Citizenship Education (GCED) are at the core of SDG 4 Target 4.7, which aims to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.
- 3.9 The SDGs provide an excellent opportunity to strengthen our perspective on ESD. UN General Assembly Resolution 72/222<sup>7</sup> recognized ESD as “an integral element of SDG 4 on education and a key enabler of all the other SDGs”. The 17 SDGs cover the key environmental challenges (e.g. climate change, water, ocean and land), and also the fundamental issues that need to be taken into consideration in development discourses, such as poverty, gender equality<sup>8</sup> and equity.<sup>9</sup>
- 3.10 The criticism that ESD has received for its “vagueness”, which stems in part from its broad and inclusive perspective and the ever-changing nature of sustainability issues, can be addressed more concretely when the field is linked with the SDGs. Among the 17 SDGs, prioritization depending on national and local needs can be considered. For example, climate change remains one of the key focus areas. ESD can also address the interlinkages of the SDGs, long advocated for as essential for genuine progress towards sustainable development. The marriage of ESD and the SDGs is not only a necessity but a “win-win” for both fields.

---

<sup>6</sup> As part of the 6th Consultation on the 1974 UNESCO Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which includes questions on ESD. The survey tool used for the monitoring of the 1974 Recommendation is also the one used for monitoring Target 4.7 of SDG 4, where ESD is an integral element.

<sup>7</sup> ESD is also part of various other international agreements concerned with sustainable development, such as the three “Rio Conventions” (on climate change, biodiversity and desertification), the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (2012-2021), among others.

<sup>8</sup> For example, ESD is an instrument to achieve all the SDGs, and each of the SDGs comes with specific gendered challenges. ESD takes on a cross-disciplinary and systemic approach that enables the question of gender equality to be linked to the various issues of sustainable development. There is, for example, a gendered facet of vulnerability to hazards induced by climate change. When disasters occur, more women die than men because social rules of conduct mean that, for example in the case of flooding, women often have not learned to swim, and have behavioural restrictions that limit their mobility in the face of risk. It should therefore become a priority to provide women with access to ESD. In this regard, ESD actively promotes gender equality, and creates conditions and strategies that empower women.

<sup>9</sup> Note that the concept of sustainable development and its challenges include a vast array of complex issues and views that may not have been fully represented in the SDGs.



#### 4. Required reflections

- 4.1 **Transformative action:** How to encourage learners to undertake transformative actions for sustainability has been a major preoccupation for ESD. The symposium series, held from 2016 to 2018 around the world in preparation of this document, revealed a few important insights into how transformative actions take place.
- 4.2 First of all, transformation necessitates, among other things, a certain level of disruption, with people opting to step outside the safety of the status quo or the “usual” way of thinking, behaving or living. It requires courage, persistence and determination, which can be present at different degrees, and which are best sourced from personal conviction, insight, or the simple feeling of what is right.
- 4.3 Second, there are different stages of transformation. With the acquisition of knowledge and information, learners come to be aware of the existence of certain realities. With critical analysis, they begin to understand the complexity of those realities. An experiential exposure to the realities provides them with a deeper connection with the issues, which can also lead to an empathic connection to those affected by the said realities. Empathy can turn into compassion if the exposed realities bear relevance to the learners’ own lives and their sense of identity. A tipping point arrives where a compassionate mind is set on the path of empowerment.<sup>10</sup>
- 4.4 The pedagogical implications of this understanding are many and various. Opportunities to launch critical inquiry, exposure to realities, relevance to our own lives and the presence of influential peers, mentors or role models, as well as tipping points, play an important role in empowering individuals to take decisive actions. It is also important for learners to have the space to experiment with new “disruptive” ideas, which can facilitate critical perspectives as well as bring about a tipping point. Formal education alone is not enough. Non-formal education and informal learning, including intergenerational lifelong learning taking place in the community, provides learners with critical opportunities to relate them to the realities that concern them and to be influenced to take the necessary actions.
- 4.5 There has to be more attention to individuals and how they are transformed. Fundamental changes required for a sustainable future start with individuals and their change of behaviour, attitude and lifestyle, while the contextual factors and institutional support provide an enabling environment and can bulwark individual contributions. This is particularly so among the younger generation whose transformative action is often prompted when they attach importance to certain values and a lifestyle that corresponds to their sense of identity. ESD is needed to provide them with critical thinking skills to reflect on individual values, attitudes and behaviours as well as lifestyle choices.
- 4.6 Last, but not least, the reflection on transformative action points to the absolute importance of community. In a community, which can be defined not only physically, but also virtually, socially, politically or culturally, learners find values and causes that concern them both individually and collectively. They can also find other fellow members and bond with them, which generates solidarity and facilitates collective action for transformation and a culture of sustainability.
- 4.7 ESD in action is basically citizenship in action. It evokes the lifelong learning perspective, taking place not only at school, but also outside the school environment, throughout the life of each individual. Based on human rights and principles such as participation, non-discrimination

---

<sup>10</sup> One does not necessarily go through the stages of transformation (awareness, understanding of complexities, empathy, compassion, empowerment) in a linear fashion. Stages can be skipped with individuals moving from, say, the first factual stage, directly, to the final stage of empowerment. There can also be cases where individuals start with empathy or compassion, and only later on approach the matter with cognitive awareness, instead of starting with the awareness stage. The process and the pace at which individuals go through these stages can also vary.



and accountability, it interacts with the social and cultural milieu of the community and stimulates social learning within it. Cultural identity can play an important role. In order to link up with communities more closely, schools should be granted more autonomy in implementing the curricula framework and managing their daily activities. ESD in action therefore requires a new perspective on the roles and functions of schools.

- 4.8 **Structural changes:** As much as attention is required for what is happening at the individual level in relation to transformative decisions and experience, there is a need for ESD to focus more on deep structural causes.
- 4.9 The relationship between economic growth and sustainable development is one of the pertinent issues in this regard. There is wide agreement that it is challenging to reconcile economic growth with the principles of sustainable development, as far as current industrial and production patterns continue. Ever accelerating production and consumption deplete natural resources, produce unmanageable amounts of waste and lead to a rise in global temperatures. Many laudable and credible initiatives to promote sustainable production and consumption exist, but their impact has been limited.
- 4.10 ESD in the future will have to encourage learners to explore values which could provide an alternative to consumer societies, such as sufficiency, fairness and solidarity. The emerging interest in a circular economy and a sharing economy represents one of those alternatives.<sup>11</sup> ESD can provide training for key stakeholders in the private sector and raise financial literacy to support sustainable economic practices. ESD also has to affect the unsustainable production patterns of current economic structures more directly. This means that people have to be empowered to engage directly in the political process and advocate, for example, for appropriate environmental regulations for businesses.
- 4.11 A structural view is required also to address ESD in the context of extreme poverty. Some consider that ESD is a “luxury” in the context of extreme poverty or other challenging survival situations (e.g. conflict or refugee situations). There is some truth to this in that the full complexity and relevance of the concept of sustainable development does not immediately resonate with people trying to survive on a daily basis, but this does not negate the importance of ESD to populations in need.
- 4.12 Populations in extreme poverty are often the victims of calamitous development and natural disasters. They are affected much more directly by environmental degradation and the lack of economic and social sustainability. ESD approaches that may work for populations living in more fortunate situations may not necessarily be effective for populations in need. ESD approaches need to be contextualized to the realities of target populations.
- 4.13 For example, the use of community, advocated above as the platform for action, may be approached differently in contexts of extreme poverty. Extreme poverty is often rampant among migrant populations. The “members” of these groups are brought together artificially with no inherent ties or shared identity. Populations in refugee or other conflictual situations often face the same fate. For such populations, community, which could provide a useful platform for action, should take into consideration the particular issue of group identity.
- 4.14 Furthermore, the approach for populations in extreme poverty may require more attention to the fundamentals. The starting point should be, first and foremost, to ensure and restore human dignity and the right to live decently. Providing people with basic and other relevant life-

---

<sup>11</sup> A circular economy promotes a shift from a “take, make and dispose” model to a “cradle to cradle” approach based on long-lasting product design, repair, reuse, refurbishing and recycling. It argues that even in a sustainable world, consumers can keep enjoying similar products and services. For example, mobile phones can be designed in a different way to allow valuable parts to be reused more easily. While massive amounts of clothes are thrown away due to the “fast-fashion” trend, some textile companies are restructuring their operation systems to enable use of more recycled fibres in place of primary raw materials.

skills, or skills to ensure their livelihood in order to confront and overcome extreme poverty, is a priority. This cannot be done without addressing the wider political, historical, social and economic contexts from which their suffering springs and is perpetuated.

- 415 **The technological future:** According to a report published in 2015 by the World Economic Forum, by 2025, or within less than just ten years, the world will witness major technological shifts that will change every aspect of our societies. The tipping points will eventually change not only our lives and environments, but also our discourse on sustainability. Some “old” problems will be resolved, but new challenges and risks will arise. ESD for the future cannot afford not to address the implications of the technological era.
- 4.16 The ubiquitous connection of the internet to our environments will help us better monitor and manage energy use. For example, smart city technologies will increase efficiency in managing energy, traffic and logistics. Innovations like 3-D printing may reduce the transportation required for the delivery of materials. Some of the long-standing ESD efforts to change people’s behaviour in relation to energy-saving, resource management and a green environment may no longer be relevant. At the same time, new opportunities will open up for ESD. For example, ESD can accelerate the transition to green technologies through equipping people with the required green skills.
- 4.17 On the other hand, there will also be a surge of new challenges. For example, 3-D printing can result in the growth of waste for disposal and a higher consumption. A digitally automated and connected world helps secure comfort and quality of life, but it can also pose its own security and safety risks and lead to new sorts of disasters, the impact of which could be even more widespread than in a less connected world. Applications of Artificial Intelligence are already strongly influencing human behaviour in consumption or social interaction.<sup>12</sup> The unequal sharing of the benefits of technological progress can also enlarge the gap between the “haves” and the “have-nots”. ESD for the future should prepare the next generations to stay vigilant for “new” problems.
- 4.18 Importantly, a critical perspective is required on the continuing relevance of “traditional” sustainability values. With sensor-equipped buildings, the behaviour of switching off lights itself may become unnecessary and extinct, but the value of saving energy will and should remain relevant. Ironically, the task of teaching sustainability principles may become more challenging, as technologies give the illusion that they have resolved or can resolve the majority of sustainability problems.
- 4.19 Considering the fact that the business, manufacturing and enterprise sector as well as the scientific community are often the foremost actors and beneficiaries of technological innovations, it is of utmost importance for ESD to link up more closely with the stakeholders in these communities. Orienting ESD to support the achievement of the SDGs will provide the opportunity for the ESD community to work more closely with the actors of the above communities, who are the main stakeholders of these various goals.

## 5. Implementation framework

- 5.1 **Title:** The proposed name for the framework to support the post-GAP position is *Education for Sustainable Development: Towards achieving the SDGs (ESD for 2030)*. It aims to make clear the aspect of continuity from the current phase of the GAP to the post-GAP position, while highlighting its alignment with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

---

<sup>12</sup> The relationship between frontier technology, such as digitalization and Artificial Intelligence, and ESD should be explored.

- 5.2 **Goal:** *ESD for 2030* aims to build a more just and sustainable world through strengthening ESD and contributing to the achievement of the 17 SDGs. *ESD for 2030* will achieve this through a threefold approach.
- 5.3 All ESD activities contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. ESD activities carried out by Member States and UNESCO, even without explicit reference to the SDGs, addressed many issues now concretized into specific SDGs. They include, among others, climate change, enshrined in SDG 13 on climate action, ocean life in SDG 14, biodiversity in SDG 15 as well as clean energy in SDG 7, sustainable cities and communities in SDG 11, responsible consumption and production in SDG 12, and education in SDG 4. The contributions of these long-standing ESD activities to the achievement of the SDGs are evident and they deserve continuing support.
- 5.4 Meanwhile, there could also be a more proactive role for ESD to play for the achievement of the SDGs, with explicit reference to them. Communication and advocacy activities related to the SDGs in educational settings are good examples. They will typically involve informing learners of all ages of the existence of the 17 SDGs, and the implications of these goals for their individual and group lives, including the responsibilities individuals and institutions have to assume to help achieve them. These ESD activities are in great demand, as there is a need to reach out to learners of all ages and the general public to broaden their understanding of the SDGs and education's role in achieving them.
- 5.5 ESD's linkages to the SDGs can go even deeper and beyond communication and advocacy. ESD activities might raise critical questions on the inter-linkages between and among different SDGs, which can involve tensions and lack of clarity. These types of ESD activities will not stop at just addressing topics related to the SDGs or with serving as the communication tool for the SDGs. They will find their *raison d'être* in raising critical questions related to development or sustainable development itself, with the inter-linkages between the different SDGs.
- 5.6 SDG 12 on responsible consumption and production, for example, needs to be addressed in connection with SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth and there are structural quandaries to be resolved between the two. SDG 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure needs to consider issues related to SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities and the achievement of both of these demands a balancing act. ESD in the *ESD for 2030* position should present a balancing perspective on development.
- 5.7 The attempt to raise critical and structural questions and view development as a balancing act is not new to the ESD community. From the DESD and throughout the implementation of the current phase of the GAP, reorienting societies towards sustainable development has remained as the ultimate aim of ESD. The 17 SDGs, which encompass the issues related to development and sustainability in a single framework, offer to the global community a renewed window of opportunity to reinforce this fundamental function of ESD.
- 5.8 While ESD contributes to all 17 SDGs, it continues to have particular relevance for the global education agenda enshrined in SDG 4, in which ESD has a distinct place. ESD is a key element of quality education. Its cross-cutting competencies in cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural dimensions of learning bear relevance to all areas of education. Its particular emphasis on competencies related to empathy, solidarity and action-taking can help advance SDG 4 towards the future where education contributes not only to the successes of individuals, but also to the collective survival and prosperity of the global community. It will also help the global education agenda move away from an exclusive focus on access and quality measured mainly in terms of learning outcomes, towards an increased emphasis on learning contents and their contribution to humanity.

- 5.9 **Structures:** The principal aim of the current phase of the GAP is to support the scaling up of actions on the ground. This objective, according to the mid-term review, is being achieved successfully by the GAP Key Partners, generating a large volume of activities on the ground. With the overall approach adopted by the current phase of the GAP proven effective, *ESD for 2030* recommends its main structural components be maintained, while a few adjustments and updates are suggested, based on lessons learned from the implementation.
- 5.10 First, the five Priority Action Areas – namely, advancing policy, transforming learning and training environments, building capacities of educators and trainers, empowering and mobilising youth and accelerating sustainable solutions at local level – remain valid. They serve as useful entry points for developing *ESD for 2030* activities.
- 5.11 Second, the five Partner Networks have been instrumental in reaching grassroots actors. The concept deserves continued support,<sup>13</sup> but the collaboration among the Partners should be reinforced. To that effect, programme support to each Network should be provided for activities involving different groups of Partners across the network.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, that the five Partner Networks should be merged into one inclusive Network of Partners, with five groups of Partners specialized in the five Priority Action Areas included within, but working collaboratively with other groups of Partners. Further efforts will be made to involve representatives of governments, local authorities, the private sector, civil society organizations, the donor and development communities, as well as the SDG communities in the Network of Partners.
- 5.12 Finally, the UNESCO-Japan Prize for ESD, an integral part of the GAP strategy, and which has become one of the most successful prize programmes at UNESCO, deserves further support as an important advocacy tool for ESD and particularly the post-GAP position.
- 5.13 **Activities by Member States:** ESD is an integral element of Target 4.7 of SDG4 on education. It is included as one of the global education targets for which progress will regularly be monitored. ESD is now well understood as a *sine qua non* for quality education in relation to the urgency of building a peaceful and sustainable world for the survival and prosperity of current and future generations. To further support ESD as a key enabler of all the other SDGs and especially SDG 4 on education, Member States should make the following efforts.
- 5.14 For Priority Action Area 1 on policy, ESD must be integrated in global, regional and national policies related to education and sustainable development so that these policies can create an enabling environment for pedagogies that support individual empowerment and provide skills for socio-political engagement. Coordinated efforts should be made for ESD to find synergies with other relevant national and international agendas and policies on education and sustainable development.
- 5.15 For Priority Action Area 2 on education and training settings, attention is required to promote the whole-institution approach, emphasizing the importance and necessity for schools or other education institutions, at all levels from early childhood to higher education and lifelong learning in communities, to work together. There have to be strategic policies and measures to reinforce the interaction and cooperation of the formal, non-formal and informal educational settings.
- 5.16 For Priority Action Area 3 on educators, there need to be more opportunities for them to increase their capacities to empower learners. The understanding on how transformative actions occur must be reflected in the capacity-development programmes for formal and non-formal educators so that they are clearly aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the various

---

<sup>13</sup> The current membership of the Key Partners Network, however, needs to be renewed, as their terms of reference will finish at the end of 2019, along with the entire current phase of the GAP. There will be a new process to identify partners and the terms of reference for the network will be revised in line with the *ESD for 2030*.

<sup>14</sup> The Partners referred to in this document concern 95 Partners identified at the global level within the current phase of the GAP, whose networking activities have been supported by UNESCO.



pedagogical approaches they employ. Educators must be facilitators of learning that guide the learners through the transformation as well as expert transmitters of knowledge.

- 5.17 For Priority Action Area 4 on youth, the focus will be to provide opportunities for young people's engagement. Young people must be recognized as one of the key actors in addressing sustainability challenges and be mobilized on key decision-making processes concerning sustainable development. Creative and innovative minds are among their strengths, and activities for young people should tap into these. Trends among youth related to their behavioural patterns and values need to be monitored closely to identify the best way to tap their strengths.
- 5.18 Finally, for Priority Action Area 5 on community, there has to be, first and foremost, a clear understanding that it is in the community where meaningful transformation and transformative actions are most likely to take place. In view of the concentration of the world's population in urban areas, empowering local governments in urban areas is a particularly sound strategy, while not overlooking the acute needs of rural communities. In that regard, *ESD for 2030* recommends that Priority Action Area 5 is implemented not only as one of the five Priority Action Areas, but also, and more importantly, as a nodal Priority Action Area that needs to be linked closely to the implementation of all other areas, especially that on youth.
- 5.19 In implementing activities for the Priority Action Areas, Member States are invited to mobilize the concerned stakeholders working in the areas and support their collaborative networking under a coordinated strategy, related to the national framework on the SDGs. More concrete efforts should be made to develop communication and advocacy actions to reflect the SDGs in educational practices and frameworks, while nationwide multi-stakeholder initiatives can be set up to support *ESD for 2030* at the country level.
- 5.20 **Activities by UNESCO:** As was the case with the current phase of the GAP, actions are to be undertaken by Member States through and with multiple stakeholders. UNESCO's function will be to support and assist Member States, providing them with technical guidance, platforms for information exchange and networking, and programme support that could serve to motivate further scaling up on the ground. *ESD for 2030* will maintain the same stance, within which UNESCO will support the following areas of work.<sup>15</sup>
- 5.21 First, UNESCO will continue to strengthen national capacities for policy advancement. UNESCO will also set up a programme component to support selected nationwide initiatives on *ESD for 2030* at the country level, which could include their roadmap for implementation and sharing their experiences and results with other countries.
- 5.22 Second, UNESCO will continue supporting the networking of the key partners identified at the global level and their networking process. This will be done by providing them with regular platforms to meet and exchange information and experiences and plan initiatives collaboratively. The platforms will include representatives and actors from both government and private sectors and from the donor, development and SDG communities, as well as stakeholders working in the five Priority Action Areas at national, regional and global levels.
- 5.23 Third, the implementation of *ESD for 2030* should be evidence-informed. Emerging issues and trends need to be monitored closely and analysed for their pedagogical implications. To that effect, UNESCO is suggested to conduct analytical work on issues identified, especially those related to individuals' transformational process, structural issues underlying development and sustainability and the future of ESD in the era of technological advances, with the results disseminated to the actors on the ground.

---

<sup>15</sup> A full implementation of the post-GAP framework will require a substantial amount of extrabudgetary resources to be raised.

- 5.24 Fourth, there will have to be more concentrated communication and advocacy efforts on the role of education in supporting the achievement of the SDGs. At the national level, this will be part of the nationwide initiatives for ESD for 2030. At the global level, UNESCO will develop a dedicated programme to inform concerned communities about the SDGs and learners and educators about the crucial role education can play in supporting the achievement of the SDGs. The UNESCO-Japan Prize programme, if it continues, will be an integral part of the UNESCO communication and advocacy strategy.
- 5.25 Fifth, in order to carry out these tasks, UNESCO needs to further develop its partnerships, not only with the ESD community, but also with the wider sustainable development and SDG community. The cooperation and coordination with UN DESA and other United Nations entities responsible for the management of the SDGs<sup>16</sup> at global and regional levels need to be reinforced.
- 5.26 Partnerships with other key players are also required, such as multilateral financial institutions, national development agencies, the private sector, civil society and community actors. The alliance with national mechanisms set up to support the achievement of the SDGs through education will also need further attention. In developing partnerships, the use of innovative and creative financing mechanisms will especially be explored.<sup>17</sup>
- 5.27 Within UNESCO, the Education Sector will further strengthen its inter-sectoral partnership with other Sectors, especially Culture and Science, integrating the implementation of *ESD for 2030*, where possible, into their relevant programmes. These include, among others, World Heritage sites, intangible cultural heritage, the network of Biosphere Reserves, Geoparks, small island developing States, and local and indigenous knowledge. The Education Sector will also further enhance its intra-sectoral collaboration on ESD and encourage the contribution of its relevant programmes and networks to *ESD for 2030*, including the UNESCO Associated Schools Network (ASPnet), UNESCO Chairs, UNEVOC Centres on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), the Learning Cities Network, as well as the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee.
- 5.28 Finally, various types of monitoring and evaluation will remain an important task for UNESCO, as outlined below. In light of the lessons from the GAP, concrete monitoring measures must be pursued and improved with the aim of achieving Target 4.7 by 2030.
- 5.29 First, the scaling-up of actions in the five Priority Action Areas by the Member States as well as by the identified Partners at global level needs close monitoring. Progress will be measured against baselines set at the outset. For the scaling-up carried out by Partners, UNESCO will adopt the survey approach which was used in the mid-term review and which will also be used in the final review of GAP implementation.
- 5.30 For the measuring of scaling-up in the Member States, UNESCO will revise the existing survey questionnaire for the monitoring of Target 4.7.<sup>18</sup> It is proposed to integrate the effort to measure progress of countries' scaling-up of actions in the five Priority Action Areas into this instrument. This is conceptually feasible and will also help avoid multiplying questionnaires to address to the Member States for varying monitoring purposes.
- 5.31 The second type of monitoring will be carried out within the defined scope of a programme or a project, the focus of which will be to ensure the production of the planned outputs and the spread of their impact. Implementation of the programme support for governments and global

---

<sup>16</sup> As well as related frameworks such as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

<sup>17</sup> These mechanisms could be elaborated at various fora, such as UNESCO's Structured Financing Dialogue.

<sup>18</sup> The questionnaire has certain limitations in measuring progress on ESD. The ESD topics that it covers are not mutually exclusive, nor comprehensive and it also pays insufficient attention to non-formal and informal education. To rectify these limitations, UNESCO plans to revise the questionnaire to reflect more comprehensive aspects of ESD.

partners, the establishment of platforms and one inclusive network for actors, the carrying-out of communication and advocacy activities, including the management of the UNESCO-Japan ESD Prize, will be monitored for their outputs as well as outcomes, with the necessary indicators set at the outset.

- 5.32 Furthermore, there will be a new monitoring effort made by UNESCO. In order to support the evidence-informed principle underpinning the implementation of the post-GAP position, UNESCO will carry out regular thematic surveys to identify and analyse key issues, trends and developments. This is to embed critical insights, with evidence and data, into the most strategic and effective pedagogies to implement *ESD for 2030*. This thematic monitoring will complement the normative monitoring of progress being made by the Member States that will be assisted by the survey tool for Target 4.7.
- 5.33 Throughout the implementation of *ESD for 2030*, periodic evaluations of the progress of the implementation of the framework will be undertaken.