



flowers in such a way that the flowers faced the idol. Upon enquiry, he found out that the lady who arranged flowers regularly arranged the flower from the point of decoration whereas the other lady placed it as an offering for the deity. This incident made him realize that everybody has a logic and integrity when they carry out their work, which may differ from our own. Even kids do it in the same fashion. We don't have the patience to understand and so we force them to follow the standard way that we practice. He stated that ethics are embedded values which are obtained by listening and observing what the adults do. Hence the need to listen and respect the voices.

Drawing attention towards the CEE campus, he informed the participants that initially it was a barren sand dune, however by protecting and managing it with appropriate plantations, it was possible today to have greenery and the avian biodiversity. This was an illustration of how surroundings can become good teachers. Later, recalling his initial period at CEE, he briefly explained how Smt. Kamala Chaudhary was instrumental in his being associated with the Earth Charter and his meeting with Stephen Rockefeller and both together discussing on the EC series called voices.

He then went on to explain the value of partnerships and how education could be an enriching experience by drawing upon the learnings amongst the international, national and local partners. He appealed to the institutions, academicians, researchers, communities to partner for strengthening ESD initiatives. He pointed out that collective actions are required and there was a need to understand the contexts and perspectives amongst the people. The sari was an example of this which could be adopted and worn as per the local taste, but essentially the design remained the same. Similarly educational materials must be locally adaptable and the essence of the message carried forward. In a way, it has been like a tapestry coming together with many threads with the ethical framework, which has come together because of EC.

**Prof. Ryokichi Hirono from Seikei University of Japan** started with a quotation by Albert Schweitzer "Man has lost the capacity to foresee and to forestall. He will end by destroying the earth." Further, referring to the World Development Report, 2010 drawing attention the issue of poverty and climate change – he pointed out that these were the major concerns of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Mr. Ryokichi then gave an overview of the initiatives in Japan starting from the environmental education to the world summit on sustainable development. He listed the major global threats including the economic threats of excessive dependence on foreign markets and capital; high energy intensive machineries; social threats; incidence of unemployment, inequity, rapid urbanization, governance and environmental issues.

Addressing the above issues required moral courage and Earth Charter (EC) helped to make ourselves alert to actions that trigger the global threats. Therefore, the ESD initiatives in Japan are now consciously integrating the spirit of EC into its action. Such initiatives help in education

for changing people's values, attitudes and priorities in favour of balanced, inclusive, sustainable and innovative global growth. Traditionally also Japan followed a strong reverence to mother nature and these could be found in their culture.

Informing about Japanese interventions to promote ESD activities, Japan has established an inter-ministerial committee among others to launch a national guideline for ESD and provide financial support to those NGOs and CBOs engaged in partnership with other like-minded organizations at home and overseas, through various channels including the Japan Fund for Global Environment. For mainstreaming sustainability, the different approaches to and modalities of ESD are integrated into the curricula and making the students as one of the major stakeholders in society, facilitating them to server their social responsibility for making themselves environmentally sustainable. These efforts are supported financially by various ministries of the GOJ including the Ministry of the Environment which took initiative of setting up Environmental Leadership Initiative for Asian Sustainability (ELIAS) with a view to mobilizing the support of universities, private sector and NGOs in Japan to ESD movement in Asia and the Pacific region. The Japanese chapter of Earth Charter has been on the forefront of all these activities.

Regional Centres of Experts (RCEs) for ESD has been located with each region to cater to the diverse approaches to ESD and meet specific needs and requirements of different communities. For example, RCE in Sendai Greater area on urban-rural issues, in Nagoya on biodiversity and in KitaKyushu on NGO-industry cooperation in climate change. He concluded that universities would be a force to introduce the ethical dimension to the ESD initiatives.

**Following this , Mr. Bernard Holland, International Eco Schools** began with an introduction about the Foundation for Environment Education (FEE) which is operating in over 5 continents and over 60 countries. Explaining the program, Mr. Bernard said that the eco school project was to enable capacities of the schools to demonstrate and spread the message of ESD. He illustrated the various activities undertaken by the schools – like plantations, social work, local community level activities etc. that nurtured values in the students and also transmitted across the community. The students were placed in real life learning paradigms, which enabled them to imbibe EC principles and ESD approach.

He concluded by stating the EC serves as a lens that could be fitted with any telescope in order to transmit and strengthen ESD objectives and outcomes. He encouraged the participants to create and promote eco school brands.

**Manuel Obrigon, Minister of Culture from Costa Rica** informed the participants that their association with EC started 10 years ago and it has grown over the years. He referred to the musical event at CEE the previous day and felt that EC had a lot to do with culture and that

culture would be instrumental in taking the ESD forward. Identifying linkages between culture, education and environment, he stated that societies come together because of their culture and in fact at a point of time we would not be able to differentiate between the environment and education, since culturally we would be integrated with everything around us.

He felt close to music and sound of nature which he related to as vibrations celebrating life and translating as symbols of heritage. He probed the audience to reflect on culture, heritage and environment and how culture would always be the 'educational content' that would remain throughout our life and even beyond.

He felt that the changes in culture reflected the changes in the thinking and attitude towards life. He felt that the biggest challenge was to change our perceptions and enable ourselves to change the way we act and thereby influence the way others act. He gave his example of trying to influence the government in Costa Rica during the meeting deliberations, during which he would pose ethical and environmentally though provoking questions, influencing the group of ministers to think about sustainability and ethical responsibilities.

He concluded stating that it is time to give the right value to culture and consider cultural education as a model for sustainable development.

Then came **Mr.Hemant Sahai , a student of biotechnology from VIT University** who represented youth group. He thanked the panelists to also have considered him as a youth representative and sharing space for him amongst them. He began with a quote stating "It is not difficult to do the right thing, but it is important to know what the right thing is." He built upon this to stress that ESD must enable the learner to make informed choices by an educational process that is almost like a real time experience. He gave the example of how the current plenary was organized in the open air and without air conditioners. This was a real example of how events could be held in an energy efficient way and in an ambient close to nature. He said this learning he would take forward in his university campus and try to promote their meetings in such open air settings. This was the education that the youth required, through practical demonstration and inspiration.

While recognizing the future challenges and the negative impacts of unsustainable development, Hemant was hopeful that the youth look forward to it as an opportunity to be more responsible. He felt that the situation demanded individuals to be more responsible. He further stressed that the education for this should be one that brings empathy and not sympathy. Encouraging innovations for meeting the future challenges, it is also important to replicate models that are already efficient. He pointed out the choices made must be viable to sustain the effort. The

education must deliver clear message to the youths. The youth must have an opportunity to revisit our actions and learn from the final outcomes.

Hemant then stressed the importance of individual actions, giving an example of the action of a boy throwing starfish on the shore back into the sea. When asked what significance was it since it did not matter saving a few starfish from the vast ocean, he pointed out that it is the value of the action that mattered rather than the numbers. This action is what mattered to the youth. The value enshrined was cherished to be pursued come what may. Hemant concluded saying that “if we can’t fly, run, if we can’t run, walk, if we can’t walk, crawl..” this was the commitment that youths had to move forward. He ended with a positive note on encouraging the audience to move forward.

The plenary concluded with a film clip on the **Journey of the Universe** by Mary Evelyn Tucker.