

WORKSHOP 1

School Education and Teacher Training

Moderators:

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Environmental education cannot be transformative if we don't give it a solid ethical foundation. The Tbilisi Declaration states that "environmental education should ... encourage those ethical ... values which ... will further the development of conduct compatible with the preservation and improvement of the environment"

It is well realized that the world is undergoing profound environmental, social and economic changes and faces an uncertain future. Commitment to a shared ethical framework that provides a clear sense of direction is essential if the people of the world are to come together in the midst of their diversity and build a global society that is just, sustainable, and peaceful. The Earth Charter is an expression of the widespread aspiration in the emerging global civil society for a shared vision of a better world.

The Earth Charter is a declaration of fundamental ethical principles for building a just, sustainable and peaceful global society in the 21st century. It seeks to inspire in all people a new sense of global interdependence and shared responsibility for the well-being of the whole human family, the greater community of life, and future generations. It is a vision of hope and a call to action. The Earth Charter is centrally concerned with the transition to sustainable ways of living and sustainable human development.

The Earth Charter is being used in primary and secondary education around the world. Teachers from different countries India, Costa Rica, Australia, Portugal, Nigeria and USA are experimenting with the Earth Charter, trying to incorporate in different school activities and in the curricula, with the aim to transform the school into a sustainable, just and peaceful community.

As a declaration of shared values and ethical principles for sustainability, the Earth Charter provides the school teachers with an integrated and coherent framework for developing educational programmes and curricula aimed at teaching and learning for a more just, sustainable and peaceful world. The Earth Charter International Secretariat and many members of the Earth Charter network have been creating tools and materials to help teachers and students to learn and understand the concept of sustainability using the Earth Charter lens. These materials also promote ethical reflections on the values that guide people and present the values that could help guide people and societies to be more sustainable.

An important challenge when discussing about incorporating values into education processes is the concern of "which" values and "whose" values are being promoted. Such concerns are less of an issue when the values being examined represent core values that respect human dignity, are life affirming and are consistent with those of many cultures around the world. Nonetheless, it is important to discuss how to deal with this concerned shared by many educators.

While Environmental Education is now a part of the school curriculum the focus is often on content and activities with very little emphasis on the inherent values and ethical principles that lie beneath these actions. It is also recognised that teacher education and training need reorientation to facilitate this education. This workshop will discuss the ethical framework required in this context.

This workshop will also look at furthering the development of tools and resources for integrating the Earth Charter in school education and promoting the use of the EC in teacher training modules for ESD. It will be a forum for sharing of good practices of using the EC in schools from around the world, and exploring the creation of indicators for ESD guided by the Earth Charter. Participants will explore how the ethical framework for education fostering sustainable ways of living can help realize and deepen the emerging understanding of ESD in the context of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development

Objectives of this session

1. Sharing of experiences and good practices.
2. Exploring and clarifying how the Earth Charter as an ethical framework and guide to action can be used most effectively in each area.
3. Exploring ways to develop the resources and tools needed to support EC activities in each area.

A summary of the discussion at the workshops will be posted on the Conference website each day. Each workshop will come up with a final report on day three. The report will include a road map for the future and a set of recommendations for the Rio plus 20 Conference proposed in Brazil 2012, the end of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) Conference in Japan in 2014, as well as for the next decade of the Earth Charter 2010 - 2020.