



cmec

Council of
Ministers
of Education,
Canada

Conseil des
ministres
de l'Éducation
(Canada)

**UNESCO World Conference on
Education for Sustainable Development 2014**

Aichi-Nagoya, Japan
November 10–12, 2014

Report of the Canadian Delegation

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Canadian delegation.....	3
3. Main issues discussed that are relevant to CMEC	4
4. Main messages conveyed by the CMEC representatives	5
5. Main outcomes of the conference.....	5
6. Follow-up for CMEC.....	6

1. Introduction

The UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development 2014 marked the end of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD 2005–2014), for which UNESCO was designated lead agency by the UN General Assembly in 2002, and the launch of the Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD, the follow-up to DESD. The goal of GAP, as endorsed by Members States at the 37th session of the UNESCO General Conference, is “to generate and scale up action in all levels and areas of education and learning to accelerate progress toward sustainable development.”

Under the banner of “Learning Today for a Sustainable Future,” the conference celebrated the achievements of DESD and identified lessons learned, while setting the stage for the future of ESD under GAP. The conference took place at a time when the global community, through various processes, is deliberating on goals and targets for a post-2015 development agenda. ESD, as is widely recognized, is a crucial element of that agenda.

Some 1,000 participants, including 76 ministers from 140 countries, attended the three-day conference, which included a high-level round table, four plenary sessions, and 34 workshops, as well as 42 exhibition booths and 25 side events that showcased successful ESD projects from around the world.

Note that in response to an invitation from UNESCO for the coordination of a workshop by CMEC, Manitoba was nominated to act as a coordinator for the Cluster IV.2 workshop entitled: ESD in the post-2015 era: from policy to practice.

The draft program for the conference is available at:
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002306/230613E.pdf>.

2. Canadian delegation

- The Honorable Susan Sullivan, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, Newfoundland and Labrador, as head of the delegation;
- Gerald Farthing, Deputy Minister, Department of Education and Advanced Learning, Manitoba, and Chair of the UNECE Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development;
- Jennifer Tulk, Director of Communications, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Newfoundland and Labrador;
- Carolee Buckler, Senior Policy Advisor and Sustainable Development Coordinator, Department of Education and Advanced Learning, Manitoba;
- Antonella Manca-Mangoff, Coordinator, International unit, CMEC Secretariat; and
- Marcel Courchesne, Analyst, International, CMEC Secretariat.

The list of participants at the conference is available at:

http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/pdf/esd2014/WCESD_list_of_participants.pdf.

3. Main issues discussed that are relevant to CMEC

At the high-level round table, participants discussed key drivers and barriers that inform a policy response and identified action items with respect to ESD by addressing the following four key questions:

1. Why has ESD been adopted by some countries but not by others?
2. What are the success factors that enable the integration of ESD into education and sustainable development policies?
3. What prevents the creation of an enabling policy environment for ESD?
4. Which actions are needed at national and international levels in order to enhance the policy response to ESD?

At the opening plenary, the final report on UNDES¹ was released by Qian Tang, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO. The report, entitled *Shaping the Future We Want*, assesses the growth of ESD throughout the decade and provides an up-to-date picture of ESD at the end of the decade.² The report also features lessons learned and draws conclusions for future action on ESD. Despite the successes that were achieved during DESD, the report identifies the following challenges in realizing the full potential of ESD:

- the need for further alignment of the education and sustainable development sectors;
- the need for more work toward institutionalizing ESD to ensure strong political support for implementing ESD on a systemic level; and
- the need for more research, innovation, monitoring, and evaluation to develop and prove the effectiveness of good ESD practices.

The second plenary underscored the importance of reorienting education by integrating the ESD concept in order to build a better future for all. Presentations focused on how ESD could reinforce quality education by equipping learners with the knowledge, skills, and values to address social, environmental, and economic challenges of the 21st century.

The third plenary highlighted ways in which ESD can help build green economies and societies that can help advance sustainable development policy and action to meet different needs around the world.

¹ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002301/230171e.pdf>

² Note that in order to prepare the final report on UNDES, all UNESCO Member States were asked to respond to two questionnaires. Canada was among the 97 Member States responding to the first questionnaire and one of 70 Member States to answer the second questionnaire. Canada's responses are available on the CMEC Web site at <http://cmecc.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/335/Canada-Response-UNESCO-DESD-2014-Questionnaires-1-and-2-EN.pdf>.

4. Main messages conveyed by the CMEC representatives

At the high-level round table, Minister Sullivan stressed the importance of integrating 21st-century learning into ESD and how it contributes to quality education in the Canadian context. She indicated that an important aspect of an enabling policy environment for ESD is to ensure an effective collaboration between the education community and the sustainable development community.

At the workshop coordinated by CMEC — ESD in the post-2015 era: from policy to practice — and attended by more than 100 participants, Minister Sullivan highlighted the importance of developing education policies that address the social, environmental, and economic challenges and opportunities of the 21st century, and described a number of initiatives that have been implemented in provinces and territories of Canada. Note that the workshop was chaired by Dr. Farthing, with David Bell, Chair of Learning for a Sustainable Future, Canada, facilitating the discussion.

Throughout the conference, Minister Sullivan emphasized that education, specifically curriculum in the K–12 systems, plays a vital role in helping to achieve sustainable development and provides us with the tools needed to teach our young people, the future world leaders, about sustainability. As the world strives to incorporate 21st-century skills into our respective curricula, the minister stressed the importance of ensuring that teachers instill in students the notions of responsibility, connectedness, and tolerance, as well as equipping them with critical-thinking and entrepreneurial skills. ESD provides resources that allow students to have the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values to shape a sustainable future.

During the workshop on Developing ESD Initiatives for Early Childhood Care and Education, Minister Sullivan highlighted the *CMEC Early Learning and Development Framework*,³ which endorses play as the most important mode of learning for young children. The framework presents a pan-Canadian vision for early learning that can be adapted to the unique needs and circumstances of each province and territory. The objective is to enhance the quality and continuity of the learning experience in the early years and beyond.

5. Main outcomes of the conference

The conference closed with a declaration calling for urgent action to mainstream ESD and include it in the post-2015 development agenda. The Aichi-Nagoya Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development⁴ also calls on all nations to implement the Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD to move the ESD agenda forward. The declaration also ensures that the conference outcomes will be taken into account at the World Education Forum 2015 to be held in Incheon, Republic of Korea, on May 19–22, 2015, whose aims are to reach an agreement on a

³ www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/327/2014-07-Early-Learning-Framework-EN.pdf

⁴ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002310/231074e.pdf>

new education agenda post-2015 and to adopt a global framework for action for the years to come.

GAP will focus on action on the ground and will generate and scale up ESD activities in each of five priority areas:

1. advancing policy;
2. integrating sustainability practices into education and training environments (whole-institution approaches);
3. increasing the capacity of educators and trainers;
4. empowering and mobilizing youth; and
5. encouraging local communities and municipal authorities to develop community-based ESD programs.

Stakeholders from 80 countries have responded with 363 commitments to GAP, including one from Manitoba. Of these commitments, Manitoba's was one of five selected for presentation at the closing of the conference. Dr. Farthing announced that, by 2015, every school in Manitoba should have an ESD School Plan that integrates sustainability into the curriculum, as well as learning, capacity building, governance, school operations, and engagement with its community.⁵ Manitoba's GAP commitment targets all of its 748 schools.

The Aichi-Nagoya declaration and GAP are both important contributions to the debate on the post-2015 education agenda.

6. Follow-up for CMEC

Given the ongoing discussion within the international community on the post-2015 development agenda, which includes ESD, it is strongly recommended that CMEC coordinate the participation of the provinces and territories in the World Education Forum 2015 in Incheon.

The delegation also recommends that CMEC closely monitor:

- preparations for the World Education Forum 2015 to ensure that the Aichi-Nagoya declaration, which calls for the inclusion of ESD in the post-2015 development agenda, is taken into account; and
- the development and implementation of GAP commitments by stakeholders and governments. Note that the number of commitments to GAP from stakeholders and UNESCO Member States continues to grow.⁶

⁵ <https://unesco4esd.crowdmap.com/reports/view/297>

⁶ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco-world-conference-on-esd-2014/esd-after-2014/global-action-programme/launching/>