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Summary of the progress in the implementation of the decisions of the Nineteenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean

Environmental education for sustainable development

Background: State of Environmental Education for Sustainable Development in Latin America

1. Environmental education has not been far from the global and regional thought to forge a more prosperous and equitable planet, within its natural limits, as well as scientific and traditional knowledge.
2. Currently, all countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have legislation, public policies, programmes or plans on environmental education. Over the past six years, at least 10 countries approved new instruments (Argentina, Bolivia, Cuba, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay). See "[List of policies and legislation on environmental education in Latin America, July 2015](#)".
3. According to a survey answered by the focal points of the Environmental Training Network for Latin America and the Caribbean (ETN-LAC, i.e. Directors and Heads of Environmental Education of the Ministries of Environment of Latin America) in 2013 it was determined that countries such as Costa Rica frame the issue of environmental education in various laws such as the Organic Law of the Environment, the Forestry Law, etc. Others like Guatemala, have the Environmental Education Law as well as Brazil (Lei No. 9.795). Argentina has a National Environmental Education Programme. Also, Cuba has developed the National Strategy for Environmental Education, and Chile is one of the few countries that have a National Policy on Education for Sustainable Development (PNEDS for its initials in Spanish).
4. Some of the positive developments mentioned in the responses to this survey include: the creation or update of the policy, strategy, or national plan on environmental education, in order to allow a coordinated, multi-sectoral and decentralized implementation in some countries; including environmental issues, with emphasis on climate change, higher education laws; creation of specialized technical courses in environmental management; inclusion of the subject in the national curriculum; participatory processes; joint action with the Ministry of Education, among others.
5. Many countries also emphasized the need for monitoring and evaluation of the strategies, action plans and others, and for defining indicators, in order to know the degree of incidence of citizen participation, and to identify potential short, medium and long term developments and measures in the implementation of policies.
6. Similarly, a common aspect among all countries was that they mentioned the need to have more financial and institutional resources for the implementation and dissemination of policies on environmental education.
7. In the field of higher education, it is worth noting that, according to the report titled "[Development of indicators to assess the implementation of policies in Latin America Universities](#) (2014), based on the voluntary participation of 65 universities in the region: 30% of universities have a board or committee for participation and monitoring of sustainability policies, which are represented by teachers, students and administrators. Also 35% of universities have a communication strategy for the sustainability plan for the university community and external agents. Only 5% of universities have a tool to assess the learning on sustainability, and only in 9% of centres there is a commission or technical group responsible for advising them on the adaptation of curricula to incorporate sustainability criteria.

Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development (ILAC for its initials in Spanish) and environmental education, training and capacity building of human resources

8. The Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development (ILAC) adopted in 2002 in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (within the framework of the World Summit on Sustainable Development) provided the guiding goal 5 on "institutional arrangements" which included, among others, "environmental education" and "training and capacity building of human resources." In the process of ongoing discussion with governments on the update of the ILAC they remain under the priority area of "Governance and institutional arrangements", environmental education and "training of human resources" with renewed goals.

Forum of Ministers of Environment for Latin America and the Caribbean: Environmental Training Network and environmental education

9. The topic of environmental education has been present in all of the meetings of the Forum of Ministers of Environment. In each meeting of the forum, Ministers adopted a decision in the framework of the Environmental Training Network for Latin America and the Caribbean coordinated by UNEP through the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean¹.

10. The Nineteenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean adopted Decision 2 on Environmental Education for Sustainable Development. The decision is mainly focused on: (1) Deepening training processes; (2) continuing the provision of technical support in regional environmental education congresses; (3) continuing the promotion among universities in the region to actively participate in the UNEP Global Universities Partnership on Environment and Sustainability (GUPES); (4) strengthening the organization of youth and children for the environment at the regional level; (5) promoting the exchange of knowledge and experiences, as well as South-South cooperation among the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in the areas of education, communication and public participation, including intercultural dialogue and knowledge exchanges.

Ibero-American Congresses on Environmental Education

11. Environmental education in Latin America has been marked by the Ibero-American Congress on Environmental Education organized directly by the countries of the region over the past two decades². These congresses have helped to publicize experiences, reflect and discuss concepts and methodologies, and outline new approaches and scopes for environmental education. They have also led to the incorporation of environmental education in schools and out of school spaces with proposals for training specialists, participation of civil society in general and in developing programmes at the national and local levels.

¹ This network is financed through a trust fund established at the Sixth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean on 30 and 31 March in Brasilia. The countries that signed the Fund and agreed to a scale of annual voluntary contributions are: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela (USD 20,000); Cuba, Chile, Ecuador, Panama, Peru (USD 10,000); Bolivia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Dominican Republic, Uruguay (USD 5000). In addition, in 2002 Barbados contributed USD 10,000

² The first Iberoamerican Congress on Environmental Education was held in Mexico in 1992 and the last one was held in Peru in 2014.

12. The Environmental Training Network for Latin America and the Caribbean has been associated with the conference to contribute to substantive discussions. The last Iberoamerican Congress on Environmental Education, namely the Seventh Congress was held in 2014 in Peru (Lima, 10-12 September). It was organized by the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Education of Peru with the support of the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO), the Environmental Training Network coordinated by UNEP and many other organizations, it concluded with the adoption of the Declaration of Lima reaffirming:

- That environmental education from its transformative and political perspective is indispensable to live fully (sumaq kawsay). This requires a comprehensive, systemic, cross-cutting, contextualized, proactive, forward-looking environmental education with biospheric equity. It also carries an environmental responsibility with the common goods and intercultural knowledge dialogue, within the framework of a peaceful and harmonious coexistence with gender equality and intergenerational solidarity.

Similarly, the Declaration also expresses, among others:

- “Our full commitment to continue working on building environmental citizenship and strengthening the institutionalization of environmental education in the countries of Latin America particularly in the Ministries of Education and the Environment”.

Progress and achievements of environmental education in the framework of the Environmental Training Network for Latin America and the Caribbean

13. At the regional level and regarding cooperation between Ministries of Environment of Latin America, the Environmental Training Network for Latin America and the Caribbean is the only institutionalized space dedicated to environmental education. Progress since the last meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment (Mexico, 2014) is included in detail in UNEP/LAC-IC.1.2015/3.Rev2 report - Progress in implementing the decisions of the XIX Meeting Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean. The following summarizes its achievements:

- The Environmental Training Network has been consolidated as a community of practice among directors of environmental education within ministries of environment.
- A work plan for the period 2014-2016 was agreed.
- Training Processes have been promoted (e.g. the international course on ESD organized by the Ministry of Environment of Chile).
- Increased knowledge on sustainability policies of the universities in the region.
- Increased national university networks for the environment and sustainability (e.g. El Salvador and Panama).
- Interaction between ministries of environment and university networks for the environment and broader sustainability (e.g. Ecuador, Peru and Guatemala).
- Exchange of experiences on environmental education ministries of the environment carried out (in general terms and with emphasis on the issues of water and biodiversity), other regional, national and legal organizations (for example, through the VII Ibero-American Congress of Education Environmental).

- Increased knowledge about practices and state of environmental education in the region, for example, through research on community-based environmental education (2015).
- Annual voluntary contributions to the trust fund ETN-LAC collected (an average of USD 60,000 in the last three years).

New developments worldwide

14. In the past two years the international community has discussed and agreed on new agendas for sustainable development where education is an integral part thereof. The main agendas are the "Samoa Pathway" for Small Island Developing States (September 2014), the Global Programme of Action on Education for Sustainable Development (November 2014) and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (September 2015).

15. The UN General Assembly in September 2014 approved the document entitled "Samoa Pathway" (Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action). This document includes a section devoted to education and one on capacity building. It also refers to education in the sections on sustained and sustainable inclusive and equitable economic growth, and decent work for all; sustainable energy; disaster risk reduction; health; culture and sports. It also contains a reference to education for sustainable development under the section on sustainable consumption and production.

16. The ESD Declaration on Aichi-Nagoya and the roadmap to implement the Global Programme of Action on ESD were formulated at the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) held from 10 to 12 November 2014. The 10YFP programme (Ten Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production) on sustainable lifestyles and education (SLE), which is also supported by UNESCO, was also presented at the World Conference as key leverage points of the new priorities in education.

17. The Global Programme of Action on ESD, recognized by Resolution A/RES/69/211 of the United Nations General Assembly, focuses on five priority areas: (1) advancing policy; (2) transforming learning and training environments; (3) building capacities of educators and trainers; (5) empowering and mobilizing youth; and (6) accelerating sustainable solutions at local level

18. Meanwhile, the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2015 includes Sustainable Development Goal No. 4 regarding quality education and its target 7 provides: " By 2030, 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, among other means".

19. Likewise, ODS No.4 is linked to the other SDGs that seek to achieve: responsible production and consumption (SDG No. 12); climate action (SDG No.13); life below water (SDG No.14); life on land (SDG No.15); clean water and sanitation (SDG No. 6); affordable and clean energy (SDG No.7); sustainable cities and communities (SDG No.11); peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG No.16); partnerships for the goals (SDG No. 17).

Challenges of environmental education for sustainable development and regional cooperation

20. Considering the above references, the policy and legal frameworks and new developments on education worldwide, it can be said that the importance of environmental education in Latin America has increased. Also, that there are new perspectives in environmental education which are identified as follows:

- a. Promotion of a critical review of educational practices and encouraging renewal through formal and non-formal training processes for teachers and educators, strengthening the design and implementation of participatory methodologies that facilitate learning, understanding diversity, and are inclusive and allows the acquisition of skills for living as well as protecting and improving the environment.
- b. Approach to rural, indigenous and urban communities.
- c. Incorporation of intercultural and interdisciplinary considerations and the link with the worldviews, to increase awareness of local, national and regional realities, accompanied by a growing respect for differences and the recognition and appreciation of ancestral knowledge.
- d. Promotion of innovative environmental education tools through the use of information technologies and social networks.
- e. Strengthening the institutionalization of cross environmental education policies, articulating the management of the Ministries of Education and Environment, and between these and other governmental and non-governmental sectors.
- f. Promotion of public-private partnerships to contribute to education policies for sustainable development partnerships.
- g. Increased incidence of environmental education and training in productive sectors with the focus on the sustainable use of natural resources, generating processes to achieve sustainable patterns of consumption and production, proper waste management, mitigation and adaptation to climate change and disaster reduction.
- h. Update, adaptation and strengthening of curricula in universities and research centres to facilitate clean energy technology transfer.
- i. Strengthening the monitoring and evaluation of strategies, action plans or the like on environmental education and the design of indicators
- j. Promoting the empowerment of youth to become actively involved in managing their territories, appreciating their identity and recognizing their sense of belonging so that they become agents of change for sustainability.
- k. Active involvement of academia in the preparation of teachers, students and all community members of institutions of higher education to meet the challenges of the 2030 Agenda, and in this regard, develop and implement sustainability policies.
- l. Allocation of additional financial and institutional resources for the implementation and dissemination of environmental education policies, promoting other sources of financial support through civil society and the private sector.
- m. Further development of South-South and triangular cooperation in the region in the field of environmental education and training.
- n. Strengthening cooperation between UNESCO, UNEP and other United Nations programme agencies to promote exchanges in education and training within the framework of the decisions of the meetings of the Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean with emphasis on the Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development (ILAC in Spanish) and the Environmental Training Network for Latin America and the Caribbean.