

Summary Notes: December 14, 2004 Dialogue on Canada and the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development

A second meeting of representatives of organizations interested in developing a strategy for Canada's engagement in the Decade for Sustainable Development took place December 14, 2004 at Foreign Affairs Canada in Ottawa. Chuck Hopkins, UNESCO Chair Reorienting Teacher Education to Address Sustainability, and United Nations University Chair for Education for Sustainable Development, chaired the meeting. Participants included twenty-seven representatives from civil and government sectors (see attached participant list).

Outcomes

The agenda provided two models for discussion on a process for engagement but the participants were not comfortable relegating responsibility to any coordinating body within either model (or any amalgamated version) for developing options for debate on substance issues (vision, goals, themes, objectives, priorities, monitoring systems). There was, however, adequate interest among the participants to meet in the new year for a workshop (1-3 days) to define the substance issues after which it would be decided how to engage the larger community. Should the workshop result in agreement on substance and process issues, a formal proposal could be drafted with which to solicit funds. In that regard, some organizations have already indicated their willingness to contribute resources.

Environment Canada offered to host a one day meeting in March but, if there is confirmed interest in a two or three day session, another location must be found. Environment Canada, Natural Resources Canada and Foreign Affairs Canada undertook to ensure a workshop of this nature takes place. Chuck Hopkins agreed to be the interim chair and the Canadian Environmental Network offered to help with logistics. The importance of having cross Canada representation inclusive of industry was noted. It was also noted that conference call facilities would allow for the inclusion of a broader group at all DESD meetings.

Additional relevant information

- **UNESCO** has the lead and coordinating role for the Decade but that does not include funding. They see the Decade as a catalyst for type 2 partnerships and would like to see strong links to the Millennium Goals and to the UN Literacy Decade. It is their hope that Canadian planning for the Decade will be national in scope and include ways in which to maintain momentum over the ten years.
- The Asian **launch of the Decade** will be in Bangkok in February, while both the main launch in New York, and the EU launch in Lithuania will take place in March. Hopefully, Canada will be ready to launch something before the end of the year.

- The benefits of ensuring that a "**clearing house**" for sustainable development related education is one of the Decade's legacies was evident during participants' reports on DESD related plans/activities in their organizations. All reports included topics about which most participants would like to know more. We heard, for example, about the Canadian Biosphere Reserve Association's Chamber of Sustainability (based on the Chamber of Commerce model) that brings community members together to discuss priorities. We also heard about the World Conservation Union's work through its Commission on Education and Communication. In that regard, please note section 4, "What Actions can be taken for the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development?" at the following url. It is particularly interesting to read what other countries are doing.

http://www.iucn.org/webfiles/doc/CEC/Public/Electronic/CEC/PositionP/IUCN_ESDstatementOct2003.pdf

- **Environment Canada** is undergoing a transformation and is working towards the development of a *Competitiveness and Environmental Sustainability Framework* that should position Canada with one voice on sustainable development issues. One of the five pillars is "education and engagement" which the deputy minister was heard to say was the most important of the pillars. Environment Canada will make a current draft of the *Framework* available to this DESD group. It does not include the input of organizations other than Environment Canada at this time.
- The **federal compendium** of sustainable development education/awareness commitments in the 29 departmental and agency sustainable development strategies covering the 2004-2006 period is likely to be released in March and may well be a deliverable at the Commission on Sustainable Development meeting in New York in April.
- Among **Manitoba's extensive accomplishments related to sustainable development** is a \$3.6 million grant that focuses on sustainable development and awareness.

You will note that there are some information gaps in the participant list. Please check your name and coordinates and send any additions or corrections to me. I will then send out a complete list to whomever requests one.

The best of the Season to you all and may 2005 prove to be a productive one in terms of planning for the Decade for Education for Sustainable Development.

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