



## Caribbean Regional Conference on Education for Sustainable Development New Approaches for the Future and Launch of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development

Report prepared by Gillian Cambers, October 2005  
(Note this is not the official conference report)



The main objectives of the conference were to:

- Provide a forum to discuss and address the issues of education for sustainable development (ESD)
- Launch the decade of ESD in the Caribbean
- Prepare action plans for implementing ESD in the region
- Build partnerships among formal and non-formal educators within the region

The programme is included in Annex 1. Participants included teachers, educators and administrators from pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in the Caribbean; youth representatives from Youth-Path and other organizations; non-government organizations; government ministries; UNESCO and other organizations; private sector.

### *Highlights from Opening Ceremony Addresses*

- Most speakers referred to the history of ESD starting in 1987 when sustainable development (SD) was first defined as an overall concept
- Partnership put together for this conference represents a critical alliance for ESD (the partnership comprises University of the West Indies (UWI) – Department of Chemistry, Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development, Institute of Education; UNESCO; United Nations Environment Programme; Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture – Jamaica; Joint Board of Teacher Education; Inter-American Panel of Science Academies)
- Teacher education and the scientific research communities have come together for this conference
- There is a need to incorporate the private sector into ESD
- The Caribbean region experiences double jeopardy with low competitiveness and high vulnerability
- There is a need to expand Caribbean capacity in applied science and to move away from the standard subjects such as zoology and physics to more relevant topics
- Reference was made to the ongoing flooding during the week as a result of Hurricane Wilma and that the poor are the main victims of disaster
- Emphasis on the role of education in SD
- SD must become a philosophy and a way of life, not an academic subject, it must underpin how we think and live, and must represent a move from understanding to effective behaviour
- Revisions to the school curriculum will be necessary

- Capacity building must include skills in conflict management, critical thinking, and will require a trans-disciplinary approach
- It is necessary to build on foundations already laid, such as in environmental education

### *Session 1 Framework for ESD*

Highlights from the presentations by Franklin McDonald, Charles Hopkins and Dennis Benn

- Reference was made to the current hurricane and flooding conditions in Jamaica and the need to learn from lessons of the past, particularly the 1780 hurricane, which caused 20,000 deaths and led to the Bligh expedition to Tahiti and the importation of breadfruit into the Caribbean, primarily to ward off starvation after hurricanes
- Again referring to current weather conditions and a letter in the Gleaner of 19.10.05 – ‘A weather system is only a hazard when it affects humans. The impact of a single storm event will not be as great if mitigation is taken. Education is the best mitigation’
- Added to the three pillars of SD – environment, development, economics – are intergenerational responsibility and equity (need versus greed)
- The four main thrusts of ESD are public awareness and understanding; access to basic quality education; reorientation of existing education systems; training
- A Strengths Model was recommended for ESD: no single group can do it all, but yet every group can contribute some strength, and there is a need for some groups to take a leading role
- ESD needs a mandate from government, already people are working from the bottom-up
- Attitudinal changes are very complex and must involve all four levels of education
- There is a need for more distance education, more participatory processes in education, and more education for journalists and media

### *Session 2 Perspectives in Caribbean ESD*

Highlights from presentations by Anthony Clayton, Winston Mellowes, Elizabeth Thomas-Hope

- In view of climate change and sea level rise, a lot of infrastructure e.g. Kingston’s international airport, may have to be relocated in the long term, but what is more pressing in the short term is hurricane frequency and intensity, e.g. the impacts change significantly if infrastructure is impacted by hurricanes several times a year rather than just once a year
- The Caribbean’s economic future may lie in developing niche markets and services, and this will require investment in research and development
- The global economic perspective must be seen, e.g. by 2040 China could be the world’s largest exporter
- Countries need to look at resolving problems and not just moving them, e.g. the U.K. may be able to easily meet and exceed its Kyoto goals, but this may be merely because its industrial base has been shifted to other countries
- The region’s resource base in science and technology is very low; for most students, science is an alienating experience; in addition the region has a low number of secondary teachers trained in science, mathematics and computers
- ESD involves looking at all aspects of an issue, e.g. the present increase in the rate of homicides in Jamaica is not just a social issue, but it also affects the country’s opportunity to attract investment, and is an issue that everyone has to contribute to solving
- A survey of secondary school students’ views on the concept of nature showed that very few students saw people and environment in a mutually supporting relationship, most saw nature as a resource subject to human use
- Education must focus on pre and primary school levels when children’s brains are expanding

## Session 4 Experiences in ESD



During this session, Mr. Herman Belmar from the Bequia Community High School in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, presented the Sandwatch programme.

This was supported by a poster display and exhibition with some of the entries to the 'UNESCO Community Sandwatch Competition' on display.



There was also a presentation on a Colombian programme 'Small Scientists' ([www.pequenoscientificos.org](http://www.pequenoscientificos.org)) where children learn about science and its role in the world and how they can relate and share discoveries with family and community. This programme was developed by the French Embassy and the Colombian Academy of Science.

There was another presentation on a programme in Jamaica called 'greening of government', which seeks to integrate environmental considerations into decision making at policy, planning and operational levels of government. This programme has structured training for each ministry and is supported by Canadian International Development Agency and the government of Jamaica

### *Workshops Discussions and Reports*

Participants spent much of their time in small group sessions, results were presented to the plenary group at the end of the conference and the following represents a summary of their recommendations.

#### Curriculum Development

- Environmental issues are already beginning to be integrated into the curriculum but this refers to the physical environment – 'blue' and 'green' (sea and land) – issues; there is a need to include social, cultural and economic aspects
- Existing curriculum should be reviewed for ESD content; the review should be done in a participatory manner including all stakeholders and especially youth, and results shared with all
- ESD needs to be integrated across the curriculum through fusion into all subjects at the pre-, primary, secondary and tertiary levels and not as a separate subject; all stakeholders should be involved in curriculum development
- Caribbean culture, civics, technical and vocational subjects, entrepreneurship and financial management are areas requiring special attention in the development of new curricula; as well as ways to include marginalised youth such as those with disabilities and drop-outs. (Various gender-specific activities to attract boys were suggested: use of video games to teach boys, having positive male role models, recognising the culture of

violence and the need to change the mindset and sense of self – rather than blaming particular television programming so much)

- There was a recognition that culture is an evolving area and as such is central to ESD
- Additional teacher training is required to achieve ESD
- It will be a difficult challenge to get Ministries of Educations to agree to curriculum changes
- Continuous evaluation must be an important part of ESD, including interviews with stakeholders, lesson assessments

#### Education Policy

- Review existing SD policies, and where they do not yet exist, develop such
- Establish cabinet-appointed ESD Commissions, it may be possible to use existing National Commissions for SD
- While the goal is to have every sector incorporate ESD, the Ministry of Education is seen as the main leader
- All future policy statements should included ESD as a specific component such that ESD becomes a part of every country's vision
- ESD must be taken up at the level of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)
- Funding constraints must be recognised, as must the concept of 'reform fatigue'
- There needs to be improved access to tertiary education especially in non-campus countries

#### Science and Technology Education

- The group reviewing this topic noted only that there was a first draft of a regional policy that would require extensive review
- The youth group referred particularly to information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the media and the importance of networking, they also noted the private sector needed to play a key role particularly through internships and mentorship

The conference concluded with a call for the conference proceedings to be sent to all participants as soon as possible, and the delegate from the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States wished to present the conference findings to a meeting of Ministers. The need for formalized support from CARICOM was recognised. Everyone left with a sense of accomplishment and a commitment to do something about ESD, even if only to find out more.

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### **Annex 1 Conference programme**

#### **Opening Ceremony 18 October 2005**

Chairperson	Ms Joan Tucker, Chairperson, Joint Board of Teachers Education
Welcome	Professor Nigel Harris, Vice Chancellor, UWI
Remarks and launch of DESD	Madame Helen-Marie Gosselin, Director UNESCO Office for the Caribbean
Cultural presentation	National Dance Theatre Company Singers
Keynote address	Hon Maxine Henry-Wilson, Minister of Education, Youth and Culture
Vote of thanks	Professor Ishenkumba Kahwa, Head, Department of Chemistry, UWI, Mona
Reception	

## 19 October 2005

8.30 am

Registration

9.00 am

Opening remarks: Professor Ishenkumba Kahwa, Head,  
Department of Chemistry, UWI, Mona

### **Session 1: The Framework for Education for Sustainable Development**

Introduction and Facilitation: Mr. Franklin MacDonald, Advisor to  
UNEP

Professor Charles Hopkins, UNESCO Chair, York University,  
Canada

Professor Denis Benn, Michael Manley Professor of Public  
Affairs and Policy, UWI, Mona

10.15 am

Break

10.35 am

### **Session 2: Perspectives for Caribbean Education for Sustainable Development**

Introduction and Facilitation: Professor Anthony Clayton, Alcan  
Professor of Caribbean Sustainable Development, UWI, Mona

Professor Winston A. Mellowes, Professor of Chemical  
Engineering, UWI, Mona

Professor Elizabeth Thomas-Hope, Professor of Environmental  
Management, UWI, Mona

Open Space Session – ESD Narratives

12.45 pm

Lunch

Introductory remarks and thanks: Ms. Gina Sanguinetti Phillips,  
Chairperson NEEC, Jamaica

Luncheon Speaker: Most Hon Edward Seaga, Distinguished  
Fellow, UWI, Mona

2.00 pm

### **Session 3: Workshops**

- Teacher education
- Formal and non-formal education
- Youth education
- Science and technology education

4.30-6pm

Poster session and video

## 20 October 2005

9.00 am

Opening remarks by Professor Ishenkumba Kahwa, Head,  
Department of Chemistry, UWI, Mona

### **Session 4: Experiences in ESD**

Introduction and Facilitation: Dr. Halden Morris, Head, Institute of  
Education, UWI, Mona

Dr. Jose Lozano, Vice-coordinator, IANAS Education Project,  
Colombian Academy of Sciences, Colombia

Mr. Herman Belmar, Teacher, Bequia Community High School,  
St. Vincent and the Grenadines  
Ms. Elizabeth Emanuel, Government of Jamaica Advisor,  
ENACT programme

10.15 am

Break

10.35 am

**Session 5: Workshop action planning and review**  
Workshops continue

12.45 pm

Lunch  
Introductory remarks and thanks: Ms. Marceline Collins  
Figueroa, Lecturer, IOE, UWI, Mona  
Luncheon speaker: Professor Errol Miller, Project Director,  
Caribbean Centre of Excellence in Teacher Training

2.00 pm

Session 5 continued

3.30 pm

**Closing Session**  
Reports from Workshop groups  
Discussion  
Vote of Thanks Ms. Janice Holung, UNESCO Office of the  
Caribbean

Reception