

Declaration of the Global Citizen's Conference on DESD 2011

September 18, 2011
DESD World Festival Forum

The citizens of the world are facing a sustainability crisis. This crisis is taking shape as problems affecting and affected by the natural environment, resources, energy, populations, and food, as well as poverty, peace, human rights, and gender equality. These problems are mutually and inextricably linked, and are growing more critical as globalism continues. Various problems in our local communities are also closely tied to these global problems. The concept of sustainable development was advanced to help solve these problems and, over time, to achieve a sustainable society. Such a crisis as this requires us to become aware of the connections between our personal lives and such large-scale events and problems and to voluntarily participate in the initiatives to build a sustainable society.

In this context, the DESD World Festival Forum, together with the Japanese government, submitted a proposal for the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) at the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, and began initiatives to implement the Decade in 2003. ESD is about educating people who will drive the development of a sustainable society. It integrates the concept of sustainable development into all educational and learning processes and gives new direction to education.

In order to make the DESD Final Year Conference—which will be held in Japan in 2014—a truly world forum for ESD, spearheaded by global citizens, we set sail on a long “voyage” together. The ship we boarded is the Global Citizen's Conference on DESD, a vessel built and shared by industry, public sector, academia, and civil society.

On our 2009 voyage, we realized that creating forums and systems for dialogue and interaction between various stakeholders is crucial to the implementation and promotion of ESD, and we were able to share the values of our social mission of making grassroots public policy proposals.

On our 2010 voyage, momentum was created toward achieving practical information exchange and alliances with our active ESD colleagues in Asia, and we were able to share with them in detail the concept and outcome of the World Festival Forum that we envision.

On our 2011 and most recent voyage, we were able to discuss and elaborate on systems for shaping Japan's initiatives and gaining the voluntary participation of various stakeholders to make the DESD Final Year Conference a success. We also reaffirmed our belief in the importance of making the World Festival Forum a nationwide initiative within the greater social organization of Asia and the world.

On March 11, before we set forth on our voyage this year, the Great East Japan Earthquake took place. Dealing now with the nuclear accidents and other aspects of this unprecedented disaster, these events have prompted us to contemplate deeply the nature of ESD, not only its role in disaster preparedness and risk reduction education but also its goal of realizing safe, secure, and sustainable lifestyles for everyone. We want to confirm to all of our shipmates that our voyage will continue along with the reconstruction efforts.

All of us on this ship, our eyes set on the Final Year, have worked to create mechanisms for promoting ESD that bring together all stakeholders based on regional diversity. We also began this voyage to achieve our role as the advocate and host country of the DESD. The world's eyes are focused expectedly on the initiatives Japan will achieve for the major ESD themes such as climate change, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity, sustainable lifestyles, sustainable urbanization, and cultural diversity.

The time has come in our voyage where we must discuss the format and agenda of the DESD Final Year Conference hosted by UNESCO. We also must soon decide the host city. At last, we must prepare for the important stretch of our voyage in which we create an implementation plan for the DESD World Festival Forum. This is a new departure for us, concluding our work on policy proposals and commencing new efforts to launch projects.

We hope to deepen the project themes we have prepared thus far—alliances with RCEs around the world, learning programs for students from UNESCO Associated Schools in Japan and around the world, many unique partnerships with NGOs and NPOs, corporate initiatives in ESD in full scale, host city voluntary initiatives, and the sharing of ESD practices via common IT technologies—and to build strong, trusted relationships between the United Nations, UNESCO, the Japanese government, and the host city.

Let us all continue our voyage and join forces with various stakeholders to expand the crew of our vessel, the Global Citizen's Conference on DESD.