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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
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UNESCO's contribution to the UN Secretary General's annual progress report (A/62/79 – E/2007/63) on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) for the Decade 2001-2010 and on the progress of LDCs in achieving MDGs 7 and 8.

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Summary

1. The present report, prepared by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), is submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 60/228 and Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/51. It is a contribution to the annual progress report on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) for the Decade 2001-2010 for the 2007 substantive session of ECOSOC and subsequently to the United Nations General Assembly, and presents an overview of the progress of LDC in meeting MDG 7 and MDG 8. It follows UNESCO's contribution to the mid-term global review of the implementation of the Brussels Declaration and Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) for the Decade 2001-2010.

Introduction

2. UNESCO is committed to assisting LDCs ensure environmental sustainability (MDG 7) through its leadership of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), 2005-2014, and its work in the Natural Sciences to build the capacities of LDCs in the area of science and technology in order to alleviate poverty and promote sustainable development. In regards to MDG 8, target 18, UNESCO is cooperating with the private sector to make available the benefits of information and communication technologies to LDCs. In this regard, UNESCO has collaborated with partners such as Microsoft and Intel for teacher training in LDCs, and IT companies: Alcatel, Space and IBM for the provision of scientific information to scientific research institutions in South-East Europe (SEE), as well as with the European Space Agency (ESA) to provide ICT-based distance learning in LDCs.

Education for Sustainable Development

3. Education for Sustainable Development is critical for LDCs to meet MDG 7 because there can be no long-term economic or social development without understating the interdependence and fragility of planetary life support systems, and the natural resource base upon which human well-being depends. In this regard, UNESCO, as the lead agency for the DESD, is coordinating the efforts of governments, educators and students in LDCs to integrate the theme of sustainable development in educational systems at all levels. This is done by:

- Facilitating networking, linkages, exchange and interaction among stakeholders in ESD;
- Fostering an increased quality of teaching and learning in education for sustainable development;
- Helping countries make progress towards and attain Millennium Development Goals through ESD efforts;
- Providing countries with new opportunities to incorporate ESD into education reform efforts.

Background on DESD

4. In August of 2005, after consultation with academics, experts, the High-Level Panel on DESD, and the UN General Assembly, the UNESCO Executive Board was presented with a final draft of an International Implementation Scheme (IIS) for the Decade. The scheme provides a framework for governments, NGOs, businesses, and civil society to contribute to the goals and objectives of the Decade, emphasizing cooperation between various sectors and from the community level to the international level. It also outlines how DESD can be incorporated into other international education initiatives, such as the Millennium Development Goals, the Education for All (EFA) movement, and the UN Literacy Decade (UNLD). Much work to assess and improve education for sustainable development has also been accomplished at regional and national levels. Of the five regions identified in the IIS, Europe and North America, Africa, and the Asia-Pacific have developed regional strategies.

Highlights on DESD regional and sub-regional implementation strategies pertaining to LDCs

5. In the **Asia-Pacific** region, UNESCO supported the following LDCs: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, and Samoa, through its work to facilitate networking, linkages and exchange and interaction among stakeholders in ESD at the regional level, catalyze the creation of ESD action plans, and support environmental training for emerging leaders in the region. Cooperation on ESD at the regional level was furthered through the regional UN Interagency Steering Committee for the DESD, and the Regional Consultative Group for the Decade, which includes UNESCO National Commissions of the Asia-Pacific Region. LDCs in this region, who are part of the Asia-Pacific Programme of Educational Innovation for Development (APEID)¹ participated in the 10th UNESCO-APEID International Conference "Learning Together for Tomorrow: Education for Sustainable Development" (Bangkok, Thailand, 6 - 8 December 2006), that was held to increase awareness and understanding among APEID members of ESD, catalyze the creation of ESD action plans and promote coordination and collaboration among members. UNESCO, in cooperation with the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, also organized a regional workshop on education materials for Asian-Pacific disaster preparedness in June 2006. Capacity building for LDCs in this region was also supported through the Asia-Pacific Leadership Programme, led by UNEP and Tongji University, which offers environmental training for emerging leaders from the Asia-Pacific region, who come from varying professional backgrounds, including the government sector, NGOs, research institutes, private sector, and media.

6. LDCs in the **Pacific** region -- Samoa, Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, Tuvalu -- participated in the Pacific Consultative Meeting on the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development held in Apia, Samoa in March 2006. At this meeting Pacific ESD practitioners and experts developed a collaborative mechanism for the Decade in the Pacific islands region, and adopted a framework for action on DESD in the Pacific. This framework for action was finalized in consultation with the key stakeholders in the region, and endorsed at the Pacific Education Ministers Meeting in Nadi, Fiji in September 2006. This framework puts the "Think global, act local" adage into practice by taking the international vision and a specific goal for the Pacific, and translating these into focused priority areas and objectives for action at local, national and regional levels appropriate to the Pacific. The development of

¹ The Asia-Pacific Programme of Educational Innovation for Development (APEID) is a regional inter-country cooperative programme made up of 31 Member States that was launched to strengthen Member States' capabilities at national and local levels for creation and use of educational innovations in achieving national development goals.

local ownership respecting local context and culture is an important aspect to implementation of ESD at all levels. The framework will serve as the coordinating mechanism for implementation of ESD in the region. In addition, youth from LDCs in the Pacific region were active in voicing their vision about sustainable development during the 1st Pacific Youth Festival, which took place in July 2006 in Tahiti, French Polynesia, and focused on the theme of Education for Sustainable Development. Youth at the Festival produced a Pacific Youth Charter that sets out young people's priorities and recommendations for action in the region. In the follow-up to the Festival, UNESCO will encourage the further development of communication networks among young people in the Pacific and support concrete youth-led follow-up initiatives pertaining to the DESD and the three different themes of the Youth Visioning for Island Living initiative.

7. In **Africa**, UNESCO in collaboration with UNEP is assisting LDCs in implementing the project Mainstreaming Environmental Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (MESA) in partnership with the Association of African Universities in 15 francophone countries in the region. The MESA in francophone countries projects will involve organizing a training of trainers workshop, which will be implemented by the Network for Environment and Sustainable Development in Africa (NESDA).

8. In the framework of the Eastern Africa Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Network, which was launched with government representatives from six countries in the region, including five LDCs (Burundi, Eritrea, Rwanda, Somalia, Uganda), an Eastern Africa Learning Space for Sustainable Development will be developed by translating the objectives of the Decade into the context of local communities in the sub-region. The Network's focus is on policy dialogue and strategic planning; vision-building, advocacy, public awareness; partnership-building; information-sharing such as exhibiting best ESD practices and innovations; training and capacity-building; resource mobilization; research, monitoring and evaluation. Salient issues to be covered under the three pillars of ESD are: Society - human rights, gender equity, peace and human security, health, HIV/AIDS, governance, cultural diversity and inter-cultural understanding; Economy - poverty reduction, corporate responsibility, market economy; Environment - natural resources, climate change, rural development, sustainable urbanization, disaster prevention and mitigation. The Network will also set-up a clearinghouse of documentation, compile and share a database of expertise in the region, facilitate exchanges and cross-border dialogue and linkages to the global ESD learning space.

9. In the **Arab region**, the Third Arab Conference on Education and Sustainable Development was held in Beirut, Lebanon in April 2006 to identify the level and relationship between education and sustainable development, evaluate its present status, and activate its role in the Arab world. Arab countries' Ministers of Education, Planning and Finance and other international experts attended the conference, including the Yemen Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research. This was one of the first regional forums organized by the Arab region, following the regional launch of the DESD in Bahrain in September 2005.

10. In the Caribbean region, UNESCO supported Haiti developing new and more effective tools on science and technology and ESD education for students and teachers. In this context, a meeting was organized in June 2006 in Jamaica with educational professionals to how to re-orient teacher education to address sustainability. At the meeting, the UNESCO Guidelines

and Recommendations to Address Sustainability was discussed, and teacher educators explored ways to infuse Education for Sustainable Development in teaching and learning curricula. As a follow-up, a second Northern Caribbean workshop of the Re-orienting Teacher Education for Sustainable Development in the Caribbean project was held on 22-23 August 2006 in Kingston, Jamaica.

Mobilising science knowledge and policy to assist the LDCs in achieving MDG 7

11. The essential role of science – including mathematics, engineering, and technology – as a foundation for sustainable development and for the fight against poverty was acknowledged at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD, Johannesburg, 2002). As such, UNESCO has been working to build human and institutional capacities in LDCs in the area of science and technology in order to help the poor benefit from improved access to natural resources, particularly to safe drinking water. Emphasis has been placed on capacity-building in areas such as the sustainable use of natural resources, including water; environmental management; the impact of climate change; and renewable energy in order to ensure environmental sustainability (MDG 7). In addition, the Organization has been working with LDCs to reduce their vulnerability to natural disasters, and is spearheading worldwide efforts to develop and commission appropriate tsunami early warning systems.

Highlights by region

12. In **Africa**, UNESCO is supporting LDCs through its work to strengthen science and technology policies and planning capacities of African Member States, tackle water and sanitation crises and challenges, and support scientific research and capacity building activities aimed at reconciling conservation with development. As the lead of the UN Science and Technology Cluster, UNESCO is working together with the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Union in the implementation of the Consolidated Plan of Action to strengthen science and technology policies and planning capacities of African Member States. This plan focuses on specific projects and concrete actions needed in order to build the continent's capacities to harness, apply and develop science and technology in order to eradicate poverty, fight diseases, stem environmental degradation, and improve economic competitiveness. A high-level working group (AU-NEPAD-UNESCO) was established to ensure implementation of this Plan.

13. UNESCO is supporting the African Ministries of Water to tackle water and sanitation crises and challenges through its International Hydrological Programme, by providing water training and education to post graduate students from Africa, and exploring the advantages of Earth observation technology to assess drinking water quality in urban and rural areas and reinforce groundwater related studies. Governments in Africa have made a number of ministerial commitments that constitute a set of needed measures to address issues related to water and sanitation through the African Ministers' Council for Water (AMCOW). AMCOW has concentrated on promoting implementation mechanisms and partnerships on water, with a view, in particular, to identifying how best to achieve, by 2015, the targets for safe water (MDG 7, Target 10) and improved sanitation through the development of strategic approaches. That requires promoting better water governance and forging new partnerships on water, including the design and implementation of effective national Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) and efficiency plans. Through the AMCOW consultative process at the national, subregional and regional levels, the African LDC countries have

identified a set of policy measures and actions, which form part of African efforts aimed at tackling the water and sanitation crises and challenges in Africa.

14. UNESCO is supporting research and capacity building activities aimed at reconciling conservation with development, demonstrating sustainable development practices and preventing and managing conflicts linked to access and use of biodiversity in Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger and Senegal through the UNESCO-MAB/UNEP-GEF regional project on Building Scientific and Technical Capacity for Effective Management and Sustainable Use of Dryland Biodiversity in West African Biosphere Reserves. Through this project, one hundred people have been trained and thirty young researchers (Master and PhD) are undertaking field research, using the six biosphere reserves as demonstration sites in the region.

15. In the framework of the Great Apes Survival Project "GRASP" with UNEP and several partners, UNESCO is working with LDCs to reduce the rates of biodiversity loss by encouraging scientific research and work related to great apes under the framework of the MAB Young Scientists Research Award Scheme. At its last session in October 2006, twenty MAB Young Scientist Award Laureates were selected by the MAB-Bureau for 2007, who represented the following African LDCs: Congo, Burundi, Central Africa Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda. This new initiative constitutes a substantial contribution of UNESCO towards the effective implementation of the "Kinshasa Declaration for the Survival of Great Apes" adopted by the Intergovernmental Meeting on Great Apes and GRASP (Kinshasa, DRC, September 2005).

16. Post-graduate training on integrated land and resource management in several African LDCs, including: Angola, Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, Madagascar, Niger, Chad and Togo was supported through the *Regional post-graduate Training School on Integrated Management of Tropical Forests and Lands, ERAIFT*. ERAIFT was launched by UNESCO/Man and the Biosphere (MAB) and the University of Kinshasa with the collaboration of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo, in April 1999 and with strong support from UNDP. ERAIFT responds to the need to train "*in situ*" a new generation of African specialists and decision-makers at the level of Master Degree (DESS) and Ph.D., capable of applying the ecosystem approach and contributing to Humid Tropics Ecosystems and Lands management in Africa. Since 1999 to date, sixty-five African students were trained successfully in the ERAIFT School. ERAIFT represents a significant contribution of the UNESCO/MAB Programme in building capacities in Africa, as envisaged in NEPAD and in line with MDG 7.

17. In the **Arab States**, UNESCO is assisting both Yemen and the Sudan in developing a national water strategy and master plan that incorporates an integrated water resources management approach. A high-level consultancy mission was recently sent to Sudan to assist the Government in establishing a national water centre and developing a water resources assessment program. UNESCO/MAB also assisted Yemen with the establishment of the Socotra Biosphere Reserve in an effort to reconcile conservation and development.

18. In **Asia and the Pacific**, UNESCO is working with LDCs to build institutional capacity to manage water resources, protect biodiversity, and to support tsunami early warning systems. UNESCO is providing LDCs with support in managing water resources through the International Hydrological Programme (IHP) and the UNESCO International Centre for Water Education (UNESCO-IHE) and through cooperative partnerships with a range of

bilateral, regional and international bodies, including the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission and the World Meteorological Organization. A training course for wastewater management in the Pacific is being jointly developed by UNEP's Global Programme for Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Sources of Pollution (GPA/UNEP) and UNESCO-IHE. The wastewater-training course is addressing one of the Guiding Principles of the Pacific Wastewater Policy and Framework for Action and is being implemented by a consortium of organizations. Among available materials is a Training Manual for Improving Municipal Wastewater Management in Coastal Cities and a CD-ROM on Wastewater Technologies and Management for Pacific Islands.

19. Through UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), UNESCO has been supporting LDCs in Asia and the Pacific by working towards an operational Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System (IOTWS), supporting tsunami preparedness in the Pacific and providing information on issues relating to climate change, sea level rise, marine environmental protection, and marine science for integrated coastal management.

20. Biodiversity conservation was further supported in LDCs in this region through UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme and through UNESCO's LINKS project. Four Pacific islands, including two LDCs (Kiribati and Samoa), launched a Pacific network within UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme in December 2006 known as PacMAB. In this context, Samoa is currently preparing its first biosphere reserve to be submitted to UNESCO in April 2007, and Kiribati is in the process of preparing a biosphere reserve to be submitted to UNESCO in 2008. Numerous activities have also been carried out through the LINKS project (Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems) in Bangladesh, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu to place marginalized communities at the heart of sustainable development and biodiversity initiatives by advocating full recognition of their unique, knowledge, know-how and practices.

21. In **Haiti**, water resources assessment in the Caribbean is being approached through one of the regional projects contributing to the worldwide initiative on Flow Regimes from International Experimental and Network Data (FRIEND). Other activities included a project on three shared aquifers between the Dominican Republic and Haiti on the island of Santo Domingo, a Map of Arid and Semi-Arid Zones in the Caribbean, and support to the Fifth Inter-American Dialogue on Water Management held in Montego Bay, Jamaica, in October 2005.