

## **Asia-Pacific Forum for ESD Educators and Facilitators**

**(Tokyo, 22 – 24 August 2009)**

### Opening Address

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Director-General  
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Prof. Konai Thaman, UNESCO Chair at the University of the South Pacific  
Prof. Charles Hopkins, UNESCO Chair at the York University  
Mr. Shimizu, Assistant Secretary-General of the Japanese National Commission for UNESCO,  
Distinguished Guests, Colleagues and Friends,

I am pleased to welcome all the participants to Asia-Pacific Forum for ESD Educators and Facilitators.

Many of you know that UNESCO World Conference on ESD was held in Bonn, Germany, from 31 March to 2 April this year to review the mid-decade achievement of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development: ESD. Let me recall some of the key findings at Bonn, which seem relevant to our Forum: there exist multiple interpretation of ESD; inclusion of ESD in formal education; promotion of ESD in non-formal education; and remarkable increase in international networking. These findings call for a number of actions, such as reorienting education and teacher training system at policy level, integrating ESD into teacher education programmes and curriculum, and capacity building for ESD at every level.

Bonn Conference thus suggests us that there is much room for actions, though we witness throughout the Asia-Pacific Region an increasing awareness and understanding of ESD. Somehow many are beginning to take ESD seriously, since everybody realizes there is not much time left before the end of the Decade in 2014.

Recalling findings at Bonn, and based on the previous programmes and projects undertaken by each participating organization, with ACCU working together with you in many cases, the following should be considered as a central theme of the Forum discussion: How could educators and facilitators in formal and non-formal sectors be encouraged and empowered so as to enable them to meet challenges of ESD? We will discuss ways and means of implementing ESD, especially on the ground level, by sharing our experiences and lessons learned so that we could arrive at some reasonable guidelines for development and improvement of educational conditions, including teaching practices, curricula, and evaluation. Educators as well as facilitators usually live in a small world, rather separated from other worlds, with little resource available to them. Especially, teachers should be encouraged to look beyond the classroom walls, and come forward to sharing their concerns, worries, problems, etc. with others. Here we see how important it is for them to participate in any national and international network of ESD.

Let me briefly touch upon my own organization. Over last 20 years, ACCU has substantially contributed to Education for All (EFA) in the Region, by producing a number of quality

educational materials and by providing capacity-building opportunities in non-formal education. These activities have culminated in the production of a digital file (DVD) containing 464 literacy and educational materials in English and 29 other languages. This is one typical example of ACCU's contribution to EFA.

In this Forum, I would like to suggest to you that you will try to grasp ESD in a broader perspective of education itself. Despite considerable efforts made by the countries and people concerned, there exists an enormous challenge before us to reach every child in the world through education. Many children, once participated in basic formal education, unfortunately fall back again into illiteracy and reach their adulthood. Despite limited resources available, the issue should neither be ESD nor EFA for prioritization between the two, but we should take two on the same board. Education (for all people) should be, in theory, for our own sustainable development, shouldn't it? Then, why do we create a dichotomy between the two, in reality? I hope the Forum will address this important issue.

Then, I should like to see an active discussion on evaluation of ESD practices and activities – ESD “HOPE” Evaluation method, in which many of you actively engaged with my appreciation, serves as an example of such efforts. The acronym HOPE formed from the first letters of the words “Holistic,” “Participatory,” and “Empowering,” is an evaluation methodology designed on the basis of holistic values, emphasizing a participatory approach, and which aims to empower people engaged in ESD activities. I hope that Forum will discuss the potentiality of HOPE to be applied in any type of ESD projects and activities, especially at institutional level. I would like you to evaluate the HOPE method itself, and put it into a broader perspective to discuss what kind of evaluation is suited to ESD practices.

I would like you to actively participate in the side events planned during the lunch break. One of the side events is ESD Photo Caravan to take place today. ACCU organizes Asia-Pacific ESD Photo Message Contest in order to promote mutual understanding among people in the Region through their photographs and written short messages. The theme of the first contest was “Celebration of Our Living Culture,” which is considered to be a basis for sustainable development for future. You can see the prize-winning works of this contest in the back of this room. ACCU has been organizing “ESD Photo Caravan,” which is a series of workshops and exhibition, throughout the region, in order to think together what we can do to create a sustainable society through ESD.

You might consider our aims rather ambitious, but we hope we could achieve them eventually not only at this Forum but also later through effective networking among various organizations engaged in ESD-related activities. Some of them present their activities during the Forum so please consider this Forum as an opportunity to renew your existing networks and find new partners.

At the end of the Forum, let us hope that we will be able to agree on a Tokyo Declaration of Educators and Facilitators to share our ideals and experiences with many others in the Asia-Pacific Region and beyond for furthering engagement in ESD endeavour.

Before closing my opening remarks with warm welcome, I have to mention my deep appreciation to UNESCO and the Japanese National Commission for UNESCO for their guidance and support to the Forum. I also thank all the supporting organizations in making this Forum a richer one.

I am looking forward to having fruitful dialogues and wishing you a pleasant stay in Tokyo.

Thank you very much.