



Letter to HofS and Ambassadors/signatories and the Secretary General

October 2014

Your Excellency, (Name)

We are writing specifically with regard to the upcoming World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development that will be held in Japan from November 10-12 this year. This conference will inter-alia gather ideas on the type of education that will be needed for the implementation of the planetary post-2015 sustainable development agenda. The post 2015 period will require internal governmental integration and the formation of partnerships among all levels and sectors of society, nationally and internationally. This demands a different type of education and skills than have hitherto been the norm to enable the necessary internal and international reorientation, commitment building, and goal setting that is now being discussed at the UN.

The United Nations Major Group Commons Cluster consists of UN ECOSOC-accredited organizations and other members of civil society dedicated to working with Governments and the UN to supply the global community with ideas and initiatives to achieve sustainable development at all levels that are already being applied by the grass roots, cooperative and socially responsible businesses, and sharing communities using a commons approach.

Because a commons approach involves all stakeholders taking responsibility for and benefiting from the good stewardship of resources and productivity, it fosters social cohesiveness, caring stewardship for natural and social resources, and economic effectiveness even in times of economic down-turn. At the UN, aspects of the commons are also variously being referred to as "sharing societies", the shared economy, the "collaborative/solidarity economy", and/or "cooperatives", which are the business branch of the commons with (according to UN statistics) one billion members worldwide.

Where commons use an all-win approach—i.e. are dedicated to the well being of all people and nature—it lies at the very heart of sustainable development.

Please find enclosed a list of some ways in which a commons approach can contribute to the World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development and also to the challenges that confront us all as we integrate sustainability into all aspects of life within our respective nations and communities as well as internationally.

We should be grateful if this email can be forwarded to all of the relevant sectors of the Government of [country name] including to your negotiators from the capital and at your UN Missions who will be working on the preparations for the World Conference on Education and related preparatory committee meetings.

Yours respectfully,

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Here follow some ideas on how commons can contribute to education for sustainable development, national and international integration, and the building of partnerships. The following organizations support this letter and the listing of initiatives (below) and have requested a special mention:

The Institute for Planetary Synthesis
The Association of World Citizens
The All-Win Network
World Sustainability Fund
International Holistic Tourism Education Centre (IHTEC)
Earth Rights Institute
Commons Action for the UN
International Union for Land Value Taxation
GAIA Education
Org: Society of Catholic medical missionaries
AKA Medical Mission Sisters
Campaign2015+ International
CAFSO-WRAG for Development Nigeria
Civil Society Partnership for Development Effectiveness-Nigeria
Global Network for Community Development
Southwest Freedom of Information Act Network
Rights and Responsibilities Collective, South Asia
Brahma Kumaris Spiritual University
National Ethical Service
Earth Condominium Initiative
Active Remedy Ltd;
Global Ecovillage Network
Climate Change Network Nigeria
Centre for Development Innovation, Wageningen UR, The Netherlands

Ways in which commons are contributing to education for sustainable development

Education as a means to prepare people for an Era of Conscience (Submitted by the Association of World Citizens, the Federation for World Peace and Love, and supported by the afore-mentioned organizations)

Because sustainable development is a result of the combined actions of all people worldwide, it is important that all be educated to help to steward the Earth System together as a global commons. This will require that all contribute to their own well-being while also being sure to harm no one else and to live in harmony with Mother Nature. The Association of World Citizens' celebrating the Era of Conscience encourages people to act from that deep conscience that will foster the necessary love and peace. It requires the (re)activating of intuition. There are many ways of doing this through education including by:

1. Placing Education for World Citizens into the curricula of formal education,
2. Incorporating the teaching of martial arts,
3. Implementing the whole of Article 26, including article 26 b that focuses on the development of the whole human personality, which in modern parlance would include development of our unique potential such as is found in student-centered education,
4. Incorporating into school curricula periods of quiet reflection and/or meditation.

Making Education Available through Universal and Free Access to ICT and the Internet (Submitted by the All Win Network)

The Internet is a commons because it is constantly being shaped by all who use it and all who use it moreover reap the benefits (outcome). It is also a means to make available

thousands of commons that are together creating what is called by some the emerging collaborative/sharing or solidarity economy. The equivalent of one third of a trillion dollars worth of Intellectual Property is available for free, offered under Commons-licences (Open Source, Copy Left, etc.). So too billions of dollars worth of education in every conceivable field and at every level. These include:

- Massive online courses (which include Harvard professors lecturing to thousands of students; and MIT placing all its coursework for free on the Internet.
- Information/education on setting up cooperative businesses that do well even in times of economic downturn
- Information on how to build renewable energy installations that will provide clean and renewable energy practically for free once up and running
- How to build sustainable settlements (Geovillages, Ecovillages, Transition Towns, etc.)
- How to create community banks that are stable when larger banks are in turmoil because community banks such as Credit Unions are both financed by and benefit local communities
- How to convert to a more sustainable tax system that rewards work and discourages depletion and degradation of natural resources, and thereby simultaneously restoring degraded resources, reimbursing local communities that have given prior and informed consent for degradation of their environment; and a fund for a basic income for all people.
- How to re-hydrate and restore the ecosystems in drought-stricken areas
- Diverse ways to convert to a commons-based economy at all levels that will produce social cohesiveness and economic stability; and how to finance the shift.
- How to regenerate flagging local economies using a variety of local currencies.

The internet can also be used to provide education on metrics and how to apply them to one's individual, one's community as well as one's work environment. This would almost unconsciously lead to more sustainable practices and empower people to do their personal part to help humanity stay within the carrying capacity and planetary boundaries of the Earth System as a whole.

It will be necessary for educational institutions to develop increasingly accurate metrics for measuring our global footprint, because unfortunately, the global and other footprints that are already known do not take into account that the Earth System (all of nature and society) consists of interconnected systems that have a cumulative effect and impact on one another. So indicators of our individual impact on the whole Earth System (including the 9 aspects or planetary boundaries now being looked at by mainstream science) are necessary.

Given that we do not have these more accurate systems of metrics yet, the use of footprints (water, carbon, biodiversity, ecological, etc.) are very useful; and processes should be put in place in formal and non-formal education as well as in the business world for all to measure their individual footprints (starting with the biodiversity, water, carbon, and ecological footprints). Businesses and other work situations can be required to learn to and then to measure their various footprints and then once all are familiar with the process and have come to recognize the advantages, individuals and organizations can be encouraged to measure their footprints as well and to submit their findings to appropriate agencies so that collective measurements can be developed, recorded and prepared.

Education must become student, society and project centered. For with the various shifts that are now taking place (climate change, biodiversity loss, etc.) the rate and the nature of future change can not be overseen. It is therefore no longer possible to train for the future.

To deal with future change It is therefore important that all develop in their own individual ways (See Universal Declaration of Human Rights 26.2) so that all can evolve their own unique potential also in keeping with the needs in his/ her own geographic, cultural and other types of environment. No one may be left behind. Through project, student and society centered learning, populations are most likely to be prepared for successful on the spur of the moment action

Create a global internet site that lists best practices and peoples educational needs. so that potential learners and providers of education can team up.

UNEP's Consumer Information System (CIS) can be expanded to list both needs and best practices of people everywhere. It already plans to use a measurement system that is connected to recycling and zero waste. In addition, if it were to list best practices from people worldwide, each entry could be accompanied by an "advantages and disadvantages sections so that all can learn the optimum use of a best practice and where that practice might be less optimal. These advantages and disadvantages would be added to by all applying particular best practice, thereby increasing the understanding of what is and what is not sustainable for all those who access CIS.

Student, project and society centered education can help overcome the silo effect mentioned in the Sustainable Development Goals Outcome Document. Project-centered education tends to motivate students to learn whatever subjects are needed to complete the project and if these are additionally society oriented, they tend to generate goodwill and social cohesiveness.

A commons approach to education is particularly useful.

A commons approach involves all stakeholders taking responsibility for common resources and all benefiting from the outcome of their ownership and use. To implement a commons approach, people have to be proficient at building common agreement, peaceful conflict resolution and creating an enabling environment that empowers all stakeholders to take full responsibility.

Education to learn a commons approach would be student centered and distributes the responsibility of decision making as well as the benefits of the outcome on all stakeholders. In business, it leads to the formation of cooperatives that through the above commons structure motivate stakeholders to work hard and to steward resources and produce products with care as well as creating goodwill among stakeholders. There are one billion official members of cooperatives. For the above reasons cooperatives do well even in times of economic downturn.

Educational systems should be developed from the bottom up (with specialty subjects and the development of guidelines for how one can teach and learn about them) as well as from the top down (based in part upon regional, national and internationally agreed minimum standards.)

Education must prepare people to live in harmony with nature

This requires (re)activating the conscious use of intuition that is our umbilical cord to the rest of the Universe.

Tax structures that create a level playing field for sustainable development

Apart from being a necessary step towards and incentive for sustainable development, they will also do much to inform the people as to what is and what is not sustainable. Such a tax structure would tax those activities that deplete or destroy vulnerable resources, and also place a fee on the use of resources that must be available for all

people to survive and thrive (land, air, water, biodiversity, etc.); and it would remove taxes from activities that are essential for a strong economy such as wages and work. (Suggestion by Paul Stiglitz, Nobel Prize Laureate)

Ecovillage Development and Communities provide an excellent example and means to promote Education for Sustainable Development

The Global Ecovillage Network and GAIA Education have developed an Ecovillage Design Education Curriculum and Training Courses that feature many of the best elements of Education for Sustainable Development. Ecovillages are among the most sustainable of communities on Earth and thousands of ecovillage communities around the world offer opportunities for hands on learning through internships, work exchange programs, workshops, classes, visitor days, over-night visits, and through our newsletters, videos, and articles about [Ecovillage](#) living. The ecovillage model of development can and should be supported as a primary means of providing Education for Sustainable Development. See [GAIAeducation](#) and [Curriculum](#).

Samples of intergrated commons perspectives linked to the Post 2015 Agenda and actual global developments

The publication "The Global Agenda Shift" of the World Sustainability Fund gives examples of how the commons interact with and can have positive impact on many of the 17 key targets of the [Post 2015 Sustainability Development Agenda](#). The publication link is:

As a follow-up the World Sustainability Fund published on October 14, 2014 a 54 slides Powerpoint report called "WSF - Global Commons Bronning - The New Wealth Architecture." It connects with an actual global monetary reset, presents an "Hour for an Hour" and not currency based Labor reward, and avoids inflation and pension losses. Also it interlinks the Sustainable Human Rights, or in short Bronning Rights, that were presented in 2012 with the Post 2015 Agenda and its impact. The publication link is: http://www.worldsustainabilityfund.nl/do/The_New_Wealth_Architecture.ppsx.

Education for Sustainable Development provides a means to integrate all aspects and commitments on Sustainable Development

The new Global Action Programme is intended to "integrate ESD into international and national policies in education and sustainable development. It is to serve as a catalyst for cross-sector planning and implementation of programmes in areas such as climate change, biodiversity and disaster risk reduction." Given all of the different agreements and commitments that the international community has made to implement sustainable development, and in an integrated, coherent and effective manner, it is essential that an effort is made to use Education for Sustainable Development as a means to inform all people about these commitments and agreements and to invite them to participate in developing, implementing, and achieving the Post 2015 Development Agenda, the 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production, and the Sustainable Development Goals in a fully integrated and coherent manner. And this type of integration should be done in both a horizontal or cross sectoral and vertical manner (across all levels of government).

The Global Action Programme on ESD is also meant to provide a means to "encourage local communities and municipal authorities to develop community-based ESD programs." Such programs and plans should also be developed in conjunction with the development and implementation of the Local and National Sustainable Development Strategies that all of the UN Member States have repeatedly agreed to develop and which some 60 countries and tens of thousands of communities are now carrying out. See: the [Global Network of National Councils for Sustainable Development](#).

Proposal by the UN Major Group Commons Cluster

The following work by the UN Major Group Commons Cluster Education Working Group is a synthesis of several key global movements rising up from the grassroots into the foreground and gaining decisive momentum: 1) The Gandian inspired Design For Change, The Early Learning Centre of Bhutan and The Riverside School, 2) The Global Ministries and Infrastructures for Peace, 3) The Culture of Peace, 4) Global Citizens, 5) Harmony with Nature, 6) TEF: Transformative Education Forum and 7) The Kingdom of Bhutan's, GNH Pillar

The description and goals statement for developing the Global Action Programme on ESD states that "Education for Sustainable Development allows every human being to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable future." We thus provide the following essay as a contribution to encourage the responsible development of such skills, attitudes, values and knowledge as are needed to transition to a truly sustainable world.

1. Title. Education for Transforming the World to a Shared, Sustainable Commons

2. Rationale

The Earth's well-being is our primary metric. We recognize the quality of human life to be interdependent and interrelated with the life of Earth. Earth's systems are the library and knowledge base for educating the peoples of the world.

Through education that restores our connection with nature and elevates human activity toward a responsible ethical presence on our shared planet - where the pursuit and ultimate realization of peace, happiness and well-being are commonly held for all of life as a shared value by all - we recommend a commons-based, Earth-centered approach for education.

An Earth-centered educational approach needs to be transformative, built on the best historic teaching methods and pedagogical practices that reflect human "progress" defined by the treatment of the Earth and Her inhabitants and interconnected living systems; thereby sustaining and thus elevating humanity in a new criteria of peace and care for one another. Designed from an equitable nature-based solutions-focused problem solving framework found in communities throughout our world that explicitly argue for their own ethic of care upon their Commons as seen in the metrics of their own land and resource management, this educational approach can include what is known about how the human child best learns from an ethos of shared care and responsibility to the Earth and to all who share it in "common".

3. Aspects of Implementation that Go to the Root of the Transformation Needed:

- Quality Class Time (QTC): A set time at the start of the school day for interpersonal development that creates the safety and security necessary to clear obstacles for learning and good relations.
- Quality School Time (QST): A set time weekly where the whole school community assembles to appreciate and celebrate shared experiences and individual triumphs, talk about issues of concern, and present assembly presentations/performances with a view of sharing children's learning with the whole school community. The audience is an active participant; learning how to give constructive feedback, raise questions and doubts and seek clarification. Through the performances, children learn that when they teach, they learn twice!
- Inner Health: Twice daily, 60 second pause to relax in silence, thus creating enhanced performance.

- Outer Health: Adopt a portion of life or of the community within their Bio-region to establish an intimate link and bond; give care and attention to the region
- Leadership in Action: Lessons in good governance, leadership, and student responsibilities to self and others within the classroom, the school community and beyond
- Link Students Locally and Globally: Youth Ambassador programs to understand the differing bio-regions and socio-economic conditions of others, build relationships, and to share and reflect best practices
- Link with the community: Share ideas with community, seek support, listen to ideas of all who have an interest, celebrate; present in public meetings; and present to media
- Create and implement actual developed solutions in the community; learn about feedback loops and systems thinking to analyze and learn from results
- Learn about and use constructive communication and peaceful conflict resolution.

Indicators of Connected Earth Systems Learning where Earth is the Primary Metric, students:

- Know the status of the environment within their bio-region
- Feel a shared responsibility toward care and conservation of the environment and its elements through care for self and care for others
- Value, sustain and share pristine natural areas in Common
- Feel pride in place
- Feel a sense of belonging and healthy cultural identity
- Display friendliness and openness to others
- Love learning
- Experience the joy of giving and receiving
- Exhibit a balanced service orientation
- Display vitality and wellness
- Show contentment and acceptance of self and others
- Feel a sense of abundance in creativity and innovation
- Feel trust in oneself and others
- Feel trust in, and thoroughly “know” their own intelligence, and that intelligence is multi-dimensional and multi-modal; all contribute to shared, commons-based intelligence for true community understanding and viability

4. Other Aspects of Implementation to Be Considered

Developing the understanding that “re-inventing the wheel” can be an unnecessary waste of human resources; and realizing that implementation models that meet the above rationale, target and indicators occur all over the world (the country of Bhutan is a notable whole state example) and in many older models of education in indigenous communities. Most importantly, excavate the current value systems underlying scientifically-rational dominant western Enlightenment models to balance them into more sustainable and socially healthy models as outlined by the rationale and targets and indicators above.

Explicitly question and reconsider quantifiable metrics as the best sources of information on how effectively the human child is learning; and replace or add to this with easily measurable known social health and justice indicators of both communities and states. Ask children how they feel about their education, “learning” and communities; ask children how they feel about their future and ask their parents about how they feel about their children’s positive futures and their potential contributions to society. Formulate questions based on everyone working together to solve these issues, given that people thrive in their environments as their environments thrive (measurably) and as the ongoing impetus of education continues throughout their entire lives.

5. Complexities & Perplexities

Complexities arise from several directions in discussing what real education for sustainability and thus viability of the “Commons” both mean. However, the most important and critical complexity, and the reason for this SDG focused on educating for the Commons, arises from never allowing the questions to be raised in a language or conceptual framework other than the one currently accepted in dominant western Enlightenment models of education, exported worldwide, that center on the primacy of science, technology, economic growth and “progress” above all other goals, and measured in money above all other values. What is left un-excavated, undervalued and thus often unseen, are “worthless” concepts of the Earth as a planetary entity that anchors our mutual, interdependent survival and well-being upon Earth.

Educating for this understanding would therefore include new ways of seeing consciousness splits: between science-rational vs. spiritual-emotional, between quantitative vs. qualitative understanding of values, between apathetic passivity vs. caring activism, between disconnected and alienated humanity and the ethics of caring and valuing all, upon a tendered earth. For any true sustainable balance that we all hold in common, education itself must balance these dichotomies of thought and feeling, highlighting and discovering what is thought to be the most important and valuable to sustain on Earth.

In times of exploding problem-spaces there is a need for expanding our solution-spaces, how we concretely share and negotiate beyond words, and expand our capacities to deliberate and come to terms with differences and "others" - beyond the current "me" and "we" dictum. In India the "[handprints](#)" concept was introduced, and later in Germany "[mindprints](#)" the need to negotiate subject, cultural, and impact differences.

New ways to negotiate positions, perspectives, and differences require extra spaces in shared frames of references, call it real and immersive model-thinking and what the German definition of Gestaltungs-Competences is about. We recommend earlier [Letters to HofS](#) by the Commons Cluster.

The UN Major Group Commons Cluster submits this proposal on Educating for the Commons in alignment with all prior agreements and cites in particular the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Happiness as a Greater Role in Development 65/309, the International Day of Happiness 66/281, Declaration on a Culture of Peace 53/243 and Harmony with Nature 68/325.

Thank you for your considerations. We look forward to hearing from you with your suggestions on how we can better serve your process.