

Message from the Australian National Commission for UNESCO

We are pleased to be associated with Eco Voice to support its edition marking the commencement of the United Nations (UN) Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014. UNESCO's vision and mandate is one of cooperative endeavour to contribute to global peace and understanding through the collaborative effort of nations, including in the fields of education and sustainable development.

In December 2002, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 57/254 on the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development and designated UNESCO as lead agency for the promotion of the Decade. In response to this, UNESCO has developed a draft international implementation scheme and is coordinating worldwide efforts to celebrate the Decade. As the lead UN agency in education, UNESCO is committed to playing a key role in setting quality standards in education for sustainable development and places a high priority on improving the quality of education and reorienting its goals to recognize the importance of sustainable development.

Illustrating its strong support for initiatives in education for sustainable development (ESD), the Australian National Commission for UNESCO sponsored an ESD resolution at UNESCO's Regional Consultations in Wellington (22-27 May 2004) which was endorsed by the region. With the ultimate aim of facilitating practical and achievable implementation programs in UNESCO member states, the resolution notes that the Decade provides a unique opportunity to integrate social, cultural, ecological and economic dimensions of sustainable development by drawing together activities for various related UN decades (including the UN Decade for Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, the UN Decade of Human Rights Education and the UN Decade of Literacy) together with the DAKAR and Millennium Development Goals. The statement calls on UNESCO to draw together knowledge and experts from diverse fields including peace and intercultural and interfaith understanding, social justice, equity and human rights, environmental/ecological/future-oriented education for sustainability and ethics in sciences, and to adopt models for the development of an organic, holistic, integrated, interdisciplinary and intersectoral approach to ESD. We were also strong supporters of the Earth Charter at the 32nd General Conference of UNESCO in Paris in 2003.

Eco Voice is a valuable source of information on sustainable education across all levels of the Australian community, educators, industry and government. We look forward to working in partnership to promote the Decade.

Professor Kenneth Wiltshire AO
Chairman, Australian National Commission for UNESCO
Member, UNESCO Executive Board
December 2004