



**United Nations  
University**

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## **IMPORTANT ROLE THAT EDUCATORS SHOULD PLAY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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Mr. Chairman,

The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Millennium Development Goals underscore the central role of knowledge in understanding and addressing the complex challenges of sustainable development. As the think-tank of the UN, the United Nations University has a great deal to contribute to discussions in CSD-12 about water, sanitation and human settlements—a priority area of the UNU's research and training. UNU actively participated in and contributed to the Third World Water Forum (WWF3), held in Kyoto, Japan in March 2003. In addition, the UNU International Network on Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH), in particular, is focused exclusively on water and sanitation issues. UNU-INWEH has developed “Water Virtual Learning Centre”, a training curriculum for practicing professionals to develop skills and understanding about integrated water resource management, which was presented as a side event and at the Learning Center last week.\*

\* Side event on 21 April: An Introduction to UN Water Virtual Learning Center

Learning Centre activity on 23 April: An Overview of Integrated Water Resources Management

As the discussions at CSD-12 move forward, UNU research on water and sanitation offers a number of useful findings. A series of UNU studies revealed that appropriate selection of water and sanitation technologies is especially important to meet the goals of sustainable development. Technologies should suit local conditions in economic, social, cultural and environmental terms in order to facilitate sustainable management. Since it is not an easy task to evaluate which technologies are appropriate, capacity building (both training and retraining) of local experts, engineers, community leaders and other service providers should receive high priority.

Research undertaken by UNU also indicates that promotion of safe drinking water and basic sanitation will be most effective when such activities are accompanied by intensive hygiene education at the local and community levels. Once local people become aware of the needs and benefits of clean hygiene conditions, they show much stronger interest in and ownership for ensuring sustainable operation and maintenance of water supply and sanitation facilities. Thus, education is a key component of the successful implementation of water and sanitation projects, through identification and implementation of appropriate technologies, and, critically, by fostering awareness and ownership of projects already underway.

Mr. Chairman,

Since the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, together with other foremost scientific and educational institutions who signed the Ubuntu Declaration, the UNU has been making significant efforts to strengthen collaboration between scientists and educators. We have also been emphasizing the important role of educators and encouraging them to be more active in promoting sustainable development at all levels of education and in all sectors.

As you are aware, to further strengthen the role of education in promoting sustainable development, the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UN/DESD) will begin in January 2005. To promote its implementation, the UNU has put special emphasis on regional centers of excellence on education for sustainable development (RCEs), which will strengthen communication and collaboration at regional/local levels among different partners relevant to both formal and non-formal education. Participants may include school teachers, university professors, experts in research institutions and museums, local government officials, media and local industries. The regional centers of excellence demonstrate how education can serve as a means of implementation to achieving sustainable development. Thus, as the CSD considers what measures should be taken to advance the international community toward the goals set forth in the JPOI, we ask that education, through efforts such as the RCEs, be considered.

We are happy to note that the role of educators in the CSD process has been strengthened based on decisions at CSD11. It is our hope that as we approach the beginning of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, the growing recognition that education must be a foundation for all future efforts will motivate the CSD to further strengthen the voice of educators in the CSD process, and the role of education as a means of implementing Agenda 21 and the commitments made in Johannesburg.

Thank you very much for your attention.