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NICOSIA DECLARATION ON ESD IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

We, the Ministers of Education and Delegations, joined by International and Regional organizations and Stakeholders from the Euro-Mediterranean region, meeting in Nicosia, Cyprus, at the invitation of the Minister of Education and under the High-Patronage of the President of the Republic of Cyprus in order to promote **Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)** in our countries and the region, and decide on the appropriate ways to implement the provisions of the **Mediterranean Strategy on ESD (MSESD)** endorsed in Athens (May 2014), through the **adoption of an Action Plan**,

Considering the recommendations of the UNESCO World Conference on ESD that took place at the closing of the UN Decade on ESD (Nagoya, December 2014); the Global Action Programme (GAP) (2015-2019) on ESD, where the elaboration and adoption of MSESD Action Plan is included among the Flagship Projects; the relevant to ESD provisions of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD), the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); **and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);**

Encouraged by (a) the recognition of the MSESD by the 19th Meeting of the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention and its *Athens Declaration* (Athens, February 2016) as an integral part of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development and as a contribution to the implementation of the SDGs in the Mediterranean; (b) the UNECE Batumi Ministerial Statement on Education for Sustainable Development (Environment for Europe Conference, June 2016) which supports the MSESD and its Action Plan as a demonstration of regional synergy in achieving ESD and Sustainable Development;

Noting that our meeting is taking place few days before 2017 which marks the anniversary of:

45 years of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment (1972), which first introduced EE as a tool to promote the protection of the Environment; 40 years since the Tbilisi UN Conference (1977) on EE; 25 years since the Rio Conference on Environment and Development (1992) where Sustainable Development was introduced followed by the creation of the Mediterranean Commission of Sustainable Development (MCSD) under the Barcelona Convention and UNEP-MAP, which identified Education, Public Participation and Awareness as critical for SD in the region; 20 years since the UNESCO Conference in Thessaloniki (1997), which paved the road for the introduction of ESD; 15 years since the Johannesburg (2002) UN Conference when the UN Decade on ESD was decided and the Mediterranean Educational Initiative on Environment and Sustainability (MEdIES) was launched.

Recognizing that considerable progress has been made in protecting the environment and promoting sustainable development in the Mediterranean region and that numerous excellent educational programmes, projects and activities on EE and ESD have been undertaken at country and regional levels by governments, international organizations and various non-state stakeholders;

Regretting that despite efforts, crises and conflicts - including armed ones - continue in the region and in some cases have intensified, damaging populations of entire cities, destroying lives, social fabric, the

natural and cultural heritage, as well as education opportunities and infrastructures, forcing flows of refugees and migrants to and through the Mediterranean region;

Reaffirming that the achievement of sustainable development in the Mediterranean is key in preventing and eliminating the root causes of the aforementioned problems;

Recognizing that the process towards sustainable development is a difficult one that requires concerted fact-based understanding and policies that address the challenges in an integrated way, and **stressing** that in essence, this is the process needed to meet, among others, **the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**;

Recognizing that economic and sociopolitical factors are undoubtedly critical in driving the transition towards a green/circular economy and a more just and better governance;

Stress that the above could be addressed, to a large extent, through ESD, including through: (a) raising awareness about the need to change lifestyles and adopt a culture of sustainable consumption; (b) building capacities among stakeholders for contributing to meaningful participatory processes; and by (c) re-orienting vocational education to enhance innovation and green employment, etc.

In view of the above, We, Ministers of Education and Delegations,

Welcome the adoption by the United Nations Environment Assembly in May 2016 of a resolution on investing in human capacity for sustainable development through EE and training, which is fully reflected in the MSES and its Action Plan,

Emphasize that ESD, as stipulated in the Objectives of the Action Plan should be understood as a major contributor to the “new humanism” called for by the Director-General of UNESCO, which, *inter alia*, will strengthen social cohesion and peace,

Recognize that the implementation of the MSES is an urgent yet continuous, long-term, multi-stakeholder and cross-cutting process that provides for a better understanding of and enhanced competencies in all aspects of sustainable development and may extend beyond the horizon of the Action Plan (2017-2030),

Recognize the challenges and substantial needs of the countries of the region in introducing and effectively advancing ESD and **acknowledge** that some countries, particularly those with economies in transition, may need support, including donor support, to carry out ESD activities,

Adopt the Action Plan for the implementation of the MSES that provides further guidance on the objectives, directions and activities to be undertaken at national and, particularly, at regional level for the period (2017-2030),

Commit to systematically advance the enabling conditions specified in the Action Plan,

Commit to promote the integration and implementation of the provisions of the Action Plan into existing educational systems and national budgets,

Invite and encourage stakeholders as well as bilateral and multilateral donors to contribute and support the implementation process,

Adopt the Priority Thematic Issues (PTIs) identified in the Action Plan and **support** the coordinated implementation of regional programmes and projects integrating several of the PTIs, in order to, on one hand, achieve a “new humanism” that could contribute to peaceful coexistence, social cohesion and welfare, and on the other, promote Blue/Green/Circular Economy based on renewable energies, non-conventional water resources and eco-innovation, involving, apart from the Ministries of Education, all other Ministries and Agencies, Academia and Research Institutions, productive economic sectors and civil society at large.

Establish a *Mediterranean Committee for ESD*, open to participation from all countries of the region, for following up the implementation of the MSES and its Action Plan and coordinating collaboration among countries and with competent international and regional organizations, Conventions and bodies, *inter alia*, UNESCO, the Secretariat of the Union of the Mediterranean (UfM), the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development and UNEP/MAP, the European Union, the League of Arab States, and UNECE.

Request the MEDIES Secretariat and the UNESCO Chair on Sustainable Development Management and Education in the Mediterranean of the University of Athens to continue providing technical, scientific and advisory support under the guidance of the *Mediterranean Committee for ESD*.

Regard this Action Plan as a “new generation” tool to be considered by other regions as well, since it could (a) **mainstream the various educational commitments under the different sustainable development related Conventions and the SDGs**, (b) facilitate national administrations and donors in designing and running in a cost effective manner relevant educational programmes, and (c) simplify monitoring and reporting obligations.