

Draft presentation of the Declaration by HE Kostas Kadis Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Cyprus

*Your Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Our meeting until now has provided us with clear evidence that ESD could and should play a critical role in shaping the mind of people and particularly of the young, preparing the needed changes and transformation towards sustainable development in the Mediterranean region. Our beautiful, naturally and culturally endowed Mediterranean region cherished by citizens of both Mediterranean and non Mediterranean countries and one of the most significant North-South interphase zones, is currently in a peculiar state: on the hand it is under stress, conflicts and multifaceted crises (environmental, economic, socio-political, cultural/ethical) and on the other, is witnessing social and in some parts, economic progress, democratization, introduction of new technologies and promising regional initiatives. Among the later, I would like to enumerate also the present one on ESD.

In my point of view and based on all of what you have stated and presented, the safest and most efficient “no regret” measure to address old and new emerging challenges is Education and, in particular, ESD which provides the needed umbrella for all different targeted educations (namely on environment, climate change, water, gender, citizenship, etc.) I do believe that the adoption of the Action Plan for the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy on ESD provides a concrete message also for the rest of the world. If we in this place and moment we have managed to conclude such a progressive, forward looking plan, other parts of the world could do the same or better.

Similarly we as Ministers of Education show to other colleagues in our Government and in our region that we undertake our own responsibilities concerning the needs to promote peace, innovation, social cohesion and green economy for prosperity, but we also ask them to place education, as a whole, within the schooling system and beyond, very high among the national priorities. We also ask the EU, the League of Arab States and all other relevant Organisations, Universities and donors to support, in a concrete way, regional cooperation on ESD.

With these thoughts in mind, as I have assembled them listening your inspiring speeches and interventions, I would like to drive you through the draft text of the Nicosia Declaration which has been circulated in advance and in which we have incorporated already the comments received until now.

The draft follows, more or less, the traditional format: it has two parts. In the first one, including ten paragraphs, we justify our positions, while in the second including twelve points, we present our suggestions and commitments.

In paragraphs 1,2 and 3 we state the purpose of the meeting, its links with major Conventions and international Conferences and its relevance for Mediterranean political processes as well as the recognition provided by them

about the usefulness of the Mediterranean Strategy on ESD and its Action Plan for the achievement of sustainable development.

In paragraph 4 we indicate the continuity and persistence of our commitments which take into account what has been done until now and builds on it.

In paragraphs 5, 6 and 7 we recognise the progress made, regret that this is still slow and inadequate and stress that SD is a prerequisite for addressing key challenges as poverty, conflicts, environmental degradation and climate change.

In paragraphs 8,9, and 10 we recognise that the steps for the transformation to a sustainable Mediterranean are in fact those requested for the achievement of the SDGs, where green economy, improved governance and education/ESD in particular, are the critical factors in raising awareness, preparing citizens for meaningful participatory decision making and for enhancing skills for innovation and green employment.

In the second part we make reference and share, through the Action Plan, the UN Resolution on investing on human capacity for SD and contribute to the “new humanism” called for by the Director General of UNESCO.

We recognise that the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy on ESD through the Action Plan, though urgent, should not underestimate difficulties and should be understood as a continuous, on-going process that requires investments from national budgets and eventually from donors.

We commit to promote the enabling environment for its implementation, the integration of the provisions of the Action Plan into our educational systems, invite stakeholders to fully join and support the process, and adopt the priority thematic issues identified and the efforts for common programmes and projects.

We establish a Mediterranean Committee on ESD to connect us all and with the UN and regional Organisations and request the MEDIES Secretariat of MIO-ECSDE and the UNESCO Chair to continue their technical, scientific and advisory support.

Finally we offer this “new generation” tool as a model to mainstream educational commitments under different Conventions and the SDGs, facilitating administrations as well as the monitoring and reporting.