

# **UNDESSED Japan Report**

## **Establishing Enriched Learning through Participation and Partnership among Diverse Actors**

### **1. Overview: Efforts from the Outset of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development to 2009**

#### Start of UNDESSED

- In the process of negotiating a Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (the Johannesburg Summit), Japan proposed, in response to the proposals of Japanese NGOs, the “decade of education for sustainable development,” and a recommendation to the UN General Assembly to consider adopting this idea was included in the Plan.
- Pursuant to this, Japan submitted a resolution as one of the 40 co-sponsors to designate the 10 years from 2005 as the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESSED) at the 57th UN General Assembly in 2002; the proposal was adopted unanimously.
- Pursuant to this resolution, the government established the Interministerial Meeting on the “United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development” within the Cabinet to strive for close coordination among administrative bodies concerned with implementing the measures related to the UNDESSED and to promote the effective and comprehensive implementation of the measures. The Interministerial Meeting has examined this matter while giving full consideration to opinions from various sources and has decided on an action plan for the UNDESSED in Japan.

#### Features of ESD in Japan

##### Approaches

- Activities addressing participatory, problem-solving learning from the perspective of “building a better society” had been conducted not only in schools but also in institutions of higher education, social educational facilities, communities, enterprises, and other venues even before the start of the UNDESSED.
- Efforts are being made to advance this approach in diverse educational fields, including environmental education, human rights and welfare education, peace education, and development education, while incorporating environmental,

economic, and social perspectives.

- These have evolved into actions for partnerships and integration of ESD that take root in communities and develop into efforts to build sustainable communities by linking the wisdom of traditional lifestyles with natural, industrial, and cultural resources and also with the school curriculum.
- In line with the development of ESD, these activities are increasingly pursued through partnerships involving schools, community centers and other local government bodies, NGOs/NPOs, institutions of higher education, enterprises, and others.

#### Effects

- ESD in school education has led to the cultivation of “zest for living (vigorously in difficult times).”
- ESD rooted in local communities is a powerful tool for building and revitalizing communities. It enables residents to discover the qualities of their community, nurtures affection for and pride in the community, and raises people’s awareness as members of the community.

#### Implementation System

- The Interministerial Meeting, the government’s implementation system, is composed of 11 ministries and agencies, including the Cabinet Secretariat, which plays a central role; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT); and the Ministry of the Environment (MOE). It is implementing measures to promote ESD, principally by incorporating “sustainability” into the aims and content of education and learning and by creating and supporting partnerships among diverse actors.
- In the legislature, the Diet Members Caucus for ESD Promotion has been launched and has held a number of discussions to explore ways of promoting ESD.
- A network of NPOs and other bodies has been formed and is engaged in activities aimed at promoting ESD.
- In order to contribute to the world as the country that proposed ESD, Japan is working to promote ESD globally through UNESCO, the United Nations University, and other partner organizations.

### Global Developments and Japanese Efforts Concerning ESD

Year	Global developments	Efforts in Japan	
		By government	By other organizations
1987	Concept of “sustainable development” taken up by the World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Committee)		
1992	Importance of education included in “Agenda 21” action plan on sustainable development at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit)		
2002	Recommendation on establishing DESD, which was proposed by Japan based on proposals of Japanese NGOs, included in the Plan of Implementation at the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development (the Johannesburg Summit) (September) Resolution to designate the years from 2005 to 2014 as the UNDESD proposed and adopted at the 57th UN General Assembly (December)		
2003		Proposal by the Japanese National Commission for UNESCO (July) Law for Enhancing Motivation on Environmental Conservation and Promoting of Environmental Education enacted (July)	Start of ESD program at the United Nations University
2004		Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) First Dialogue on Environmental Education (June)	
2005	UNESCO drafts the International Implementation Scheme	Ceremony to mark the start of DESD in the Asia-Pacific region (June)	Certification of first RCE (June)

	for the Decade (September) UN General Assembly approves the Implementation Scheme (October)	ACD Second Dialogue on Environmental Education (September) Interministerial Meeting on the UNDESD established (December)	
<b>2006</b>		Japan's Action Plan for the UNDESD drafted (March) ACD Third Dialogue on Environmental Education (June)	
<b>2007</b>	Fourth World Environmental Education Congress (WEEC) in Durban, South Africa (July) Fourth International Conference on Environmental Education (ICEE) in Ahmedabad, India (November)	Diet Members Caucus for ESD Promotion launched (June) ACD Fourth Dialogue on Environmental Education (June) Japanese National Commission for UNESCO presents proposals for the further promotion of DESD to UNESCO (August) Fundamental Law of Education revised (December)	
<b>2008</b>		ESD Roundtable Meetings (January, March, September) Courses of Study revised (March) A Vision of Environmental Leadership Initiatives for Asian Sustainability drafted (March) Basic Promotional Plan for Education drafted (July) ACD Fifth Dialogue on Environmental Education (October) International Forum on ESD Dialogue 2008 (December)	Official launch of ProSPER.Net (June)
<b>2009</b>	At the halfway mark of the	ESD Roundtable Meetings	

	UNDESD, the World Conference on ESD will be held in Bonn, Germany by UNESCO and the German Commission for UNESCO (March)	(January, March) Consideration of revision to Japan's Action Plan for the UNDESD scheduled	
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## 2. Action Framework in Japan

### 1) Governmental Implementation System

#### Establishment of Interministerial Meeting on the UNDESD

Following the adoption by the UN General Assembly of a resolution to designate the Decade of ESD, the government established the Interministerial Meeting on the “United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development” (hereinafter “the Interministerial Meeting”) within the Cabinet in December 2005 to strive for close coordination among administrative bodies concerned with implementing the measures related to the UNDESD and to promote the effective and comprehensive implementation of these measures. (11 ministries and agencies: Cabinet Secretariat, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Ministry of the Environment, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism [observers: Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare])

The Interministerial Meeting has examined this matter while paying full attention to opinions from various sources and drafted Japan's Action Plan for the UNDESD (hereinafter “the Action Plan”) in March 2006. The Action Plan states the following Guidelines for Implementing ESD: Programs Leading to Community Building; Diverse Places of Education and Implementing Actors; Integrated Approach under Various Agendas; Learning from Participation and Experience; Nurturing Abilities for Social Participation; and Coordination and Collaboration between Diverse Actors.

With the related ministries and agencies steadily carrying out various measures stipulated in the Action Plan, the government, by keenly promoting ESD, aims to create a world where everyone may enjoy the benefits of high-quality education and learn the values, actions, and lifestyles required for a sustainable future and social changes, and

where every organization may participate in the creation of a sustainable society.

Based on the Action Plan, the government has facilitated discussions on measures for implementing ESD by holding roundtable meetings since FY2007 as forums for exchanges of opinions among academic experts, educators, and related persons from NPOs and enterprises.

#### Japanese National Commission for UNESCO

The Japanese National Commission for UNESCO is an institution established under the Japanese law (the Law Concerning UNESCO Activities) to provide advice, planning, liaison, and surveys regarding UNESCO activities in Japan. In partnership with UNESCO, other countries' national commissions for UNESCO, and relevant ministries and agencies, the Japanese National Commission for UNESCO is actively engaged in the promotion of ESD in Japan and overseas as one of its key tasks.

#### Diet Members Caucus for ESD Promotion

The Diet Members Caucus for ESD Promotion was launched in June 2007. About 50 Diet members have joined the league, which has held a number of discussions to explore ways of promoting ESD.

## **2) Other Implementation Systems**

Another feature of ESD implementation in Japan is the initiative taken by NGOs/NPOs in promoting ESD.

- Japan Council on the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD-J), an NPO

Founded in June 2003, the Japan Council on the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD-J) is a networking organization dedicated to promoting ESD in Japan and overseas through partnerships. ESD-J has formed a network of 100 organizations including NGOs/NPOs, educational institutions, enterprises, and other groups active in such fields as environmental education, development education, human rights education, and youth development and is currently engaged in such efforts as policy proposals, training, information dissemination, and international networking.

- Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU)

Since its establishment in 1971, ACCU has been implementing various regional

cooperative programs in the fields of culture, education, and personnel exchange in close collaboration with the countries of Asia and the Pacific. In response to the start of the UNDESD, ACCU has promoted the DESD by reviewing its past projects from the perspective of ESD and conveying the principles of ESD to governments, NGOs, universities, and other partner organizations in Japan and abroad through trainings and projects. It also spreads ESD to teachers and the general public by producing ESD learning materials and holding ESD photo message contests and photo exhibitions.

- Information Exchange Meeting for UNDESD-Related Organizations

Meetings are held to facilitate exchanges of information among UN agencies, international organizations, universities, NPOs, RCEs, and other organizations engaged in international cooperation, at which the participants assist each other's activities by sharing information on their respective efforts and on international conferences.

### **3) Implementation System of Partnerships with International Organizations**

- United Nations University

With support from the Government of Japan, the United Nations University launched the Program on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD Program) at the Institute of Advanced Studies in 2003. Strengthening the contributions to ESD of regional Centers of Expertise (RCEs) on ESD and higher education institutions is one of the program's pillars. The purpose of RCEs is to build platforms where ESD stakeholders can share information and experiences and seek partnerships at the local level; as of March 2009, 62 RCEs have been established worldwide (see the box in section 4-(5), p.17). In Japan, six RCEs in Greater Sendai, Okayama, Yokohama, Kitakyushu, Chubu, and Hyogo-Kobe are working to promote ESD activities in their respective regions. As for higher education institutions, the United Nations University decided to build a network of universities committed to ESD in the Asia-Pacific region, and it officially launched the Promotion of Sustainability in Postgraduate Education and Research Network (ProSPER.Net) in June 2008. The activities undertaken in this network include the development of ESD curriculums for administrative officials and business schools through cooperation among Asian universities.

### **3. Action by the Japanese Government on ESD**

- **International Action**

- Contribution to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

In 2003, the Japanese National Commission for UNESCO put forward its recommendations on UNESCO activities and matters for inclusion in the international action plan developed by UNESCO. Following this, the committee of experts was established under the Steering Subcommittee of the Japanese National Commission for UNESCO to consider fresh recommendations for UNESCO to further promote UNDESD, and the recommendations resulting from the committee's deliberations were adopted and presented to the Director-General of UNESCO in August 2007. These recommendations set out a clear picture for ESD educational programs and call for their deepening and dissemination, the enhancement of UNESCO activities and structures to disseminate ESD internationally, and the promotion of international cooperation.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) contributes Funds-in-Trust for Education for Sustainable Development to UNESCO to promote ESD and is engaged in new international exchange and cooperation projects through which Japan and UNESCO work together to address challenges such as the development of sustainable societies and the nurturing of future leaders in this field to further promote ESD.

In addition, MEXT co-hosted the International Forum on ESD Dialogue 2008 with UNESCO in December 2008. With a view to the latter half of UNDESD, participants at the forum discussed the creation of strategic projects capable of generating outcomes suited to countries at differing stages of development and avenues for forming more partnerships incorporating private sector activities. With the midway point of UNDESD approaching, the forum also summed up efforts so far by evaluating actions on ESD to date in the Asia-Pacific region and sharing examples of good practice.

- Agreements at TICAD IV, G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit, G8 Environment Ministers Meeting, and Asia Cooperation Dialogue

Japan has been advocating the promotion of ESD in various international forums. One recent example of this is the agreement on the effectiveness of countries' sharing of examples of best practice such as partnership projects by related stakeholders and to

assist capacity building in developing countries expressed in the Chair's summary at the G8 Environment Ministers Meeting in Kobe in May 2008. At the Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV), also held in May in Yokohama, the importance of the Education for Sustainable Development initiative and its promotion to address environmental issues effectively was acknowledged in the Yokohama Declaration, and the Yokohama Action Plan developed to implement the Yokohama Declaration addressed the promotion of ESD through integration of ESD into policies and practices to realize a more sustainable society. In July, ESD was featured for the first time in the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit Leaders Declaration, which stated the G8's commitment in promoting ESD by supporting UNESCO and other organizations and through knowledge networks among relevant institutions, including universities.

Since 2004, "Dialogues on Environmental Education" have been held once a year at venues in Japan as a "prime mover project" within the framework of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD). Around 60 participants from ACD member countries attend these events to exchange views on cooperation in the field of environmental education, focusing on a variety of themes.

- **Domestic Action**

- Enactment of Law for Enhancing Motivation on Environmental Conservation and Promoting of Environmental Education

In order to resolve current environmental problems, such as global warming, waste disposal, and the shrinking of the immediate natural environment, and to create a sustainable society, citizens, businesses, and private-sector organizations as well as the government must actively engage in environmental conservation activities. In view of the importance of such activities, the Law for Enhancing Motivation on Environmental Conservation and Promoting Environmental Education (in short, the Environmental Conservation and Education Law), was enacted in July 2003 as a legislation proposed by lawmakers in order to lay the foundations for the creation of a sustainable society. This law, the principal objectives of which are to promote environmental education and motivate each and every citizen to play a part in environmental conservation, sets forth the respective duties and responsibilities of the government, local governments, businesses, citizens, and private-sector organizations. Since the enactment of this law and the establishment of basic government policy in accordance with it, inter-ministerial

coordination has been promoted, local governments have formulated basic policies and plans for environmental education, and the development of human resources and teaching materials that further encourage such education.

— Formulation of Basic Promotional Plan for Education and revision of Courses of Study

The aims, ideals, and principles of education in Japan are set forth in the Fundamental Law of Education, which was enacted in 1947. In more than half a century since then, however, the conditions facing education in Japan have changed dramatically and a variety of challenges has arisen. In view of these changes, the Fundamental Law of Education was revised in 2006. The revised law provides for the formulation of the Basic Promotional Plan for Education which sets forth basic principles and so on for the comprehensive and systematic pursuit of measures to promote education in Japan, and such a plan was accordingly formulated in 2008. This plan positions sustainable development as one of the important principles of education in Japan and identifies ESD as a policy that should be pursued over the next five years.

In the same year, the Courses of Study, which form the basis of school education in Japan, were also revised. This revision resulted in the principle of sustainable development being explicitly incorporated into the curriculum in subjects such as science and social studies.

The principle of ESD has thus become clearly incorporated into national education policy in Japan, and efforts are now underway to put it into practice.

— Development of the Strategy for an Environmental Nation in the 21st Century

The Strategy for an Environmental Nation in the 21st Century, approved by the Cabinet in June 2007, identifies “educating people to feel the environment, think for the environment, and act for the environment” as one strategy for realizing the development of a sustainable society. To give substance to this strategy, a number of programs were adopted, including the “21st Century Environmental Education Initiatives—To provide Environmental Education for Anytime, Anywhere, Anyone” (Triple-A initiatives) and the initiatives to train International Environmental Leaders in Asia.

## **4. Overview of Efforts in Japan**

### **1) Efforts in primary and secondary education**

In 2002, “periods for integrated study” were incorporated into the primary and secondary curricula to provide time for schools to pursue their own creative and distinctive educational activities suited to their particular locales and students’ needs, and to enable children to learn about issues that span multiple traditional subjects, such as international understanding, information technology, the environment, and health and welfare. Issues relating to the environment and international understanding are also addressed in individual subjects such as science and social studies, and various educational programs are being taught in schools in line with the principles of ESD.

During the periods for integrated study, children learn through experience about nature and day-to-day life and how they relate to industry and society, using topics such as the local countryside, rivers, traditional foods, and festivals as their subject matter. These periods also provide them with opportunities to explore how society can be made more amenable to diverse people through interaction with elderly people, foreigners, and people with disabilities in the community. A feature of these activities is that they are enriched by the cooperation of local people, NPOs, facilities, businesses, universities, institutes for community education, and so on.

In order to further prevail the concept of ESD, MEXT sees UNESCO’s Associated Schools Project Network as a hub for promoting ESD. The Network aims to realize the ideals of UNESCO and to promote peace and international collaboration through classroom practice. Therefore, MEXT is working to increase the number of associated schools. The main pillars of ESD in UNESCO’s Associated Schools Project Network are education in international understanding and environmental education, and Japan hopes that, by increasing the number of associated schools and strengthening the network among them, schools will be encouraged to share and reinforce their activities in collaboration with businesses and NPOs, enabling ESD to take root in their communities.

At the same time, a number of ministries and agencies are working together to develop and renovate school facilities to make them more environmentally friendly and to promote environmental education through this process, while the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) is taking action to encourage environmental education involving community leaders and children, eco-club activities to promote environmental

conservation, and environmental education activities at extracurricular programmes.

<Example of ESD practice>

**UNESCO's Associated Schools Project Network**

- Development of global vision through “joint learning” with overseas partners (Omoso Elementary School)

This initiative uses the waterfront environment shared by the participants' communities in Japan and in the United States as a topic to encourage the development of children's sensitivity and scientific curiosity about the natural environment through such experiences as observation, investigation, fieldwork, and raising animals. Information technology is used to enable learning exchanges with elementary schools in the U.S., fostering children's global outlook and laying the basis for positive environmental action.

- Efforts linking different subjects, such as social studies, Japanese, and periods for integrated learning (Shinonome Elementary School)

This initiative links children's learning on themes such as “shopping” (involving the cooperation of local shops and NPOs), water, and garbage to related subjects, such as Japanese language, social studies, science, and periods for integrated learning. The purpose of this is to promote problem-based learning and expand horizons from the local to the global level.

**2) Efforts in higher education**

Institutions of higher education are expected to play various roles in promoting ESD, including the development of specialists in relevant fields, conduct of research on the development of sustainable societies in Japan and around the world, and as central players in activities in their own regions. Responding to these expectations and with MEXT support, universities are taking a variety of steps, including reorganizing their curricula from an ESD perspective, including ESD in their teacher training courses, conducting comprehensive, cross-disciplinary research on sustainability studies, and contributing as central players in regional and international ESD activities.

Supported by MOE, action is also underway to establish a consortium to assist the

development of environmental experts through collaboration among industry, government, academia, and civil society, and to form a network of environmental graduate schools in Asia to address ESD.

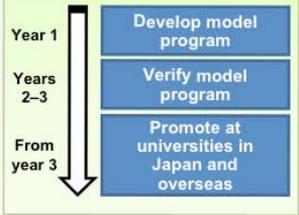
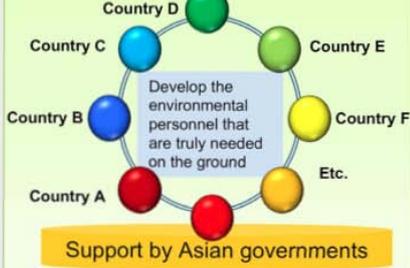
Universities involved in ESD are also developing their own network (HESD) for practice and interchange; about 35 universities are currently involved in this network. ESD is also addressed in universities and communities through student organizations such as Eco-League.

< Examples of ESD practice >

**Environmental Leadership Initiative for Asian Sustainability**

In 2008, MOE announced the Vision for a University-Led Environmental Leadership Initiative for Asian Sustainability, which sets forth its vision for nurturing personnel capable of leading the development of sustainable societies in Asia, including Japan, through their professional, civic, and other activities. Based on this Vision, activities to develop human resources in the environmental field through collaboration among industry, government, academia, and civil society are presently being pursued under the Environmental Leadership Initiative for Asian Sustainability (ELIAS).

**Environmental Leadership Initiative for Asian Sustainability (ELIAS) (since FY 2008)**

<p><b>1. Development and promotion of model university education program</b></p> <p>Developing a model education program at Japanese universities to effectively and efficiently implement practical education that contributes to human resources development in the environmental field.</p> 	<p><b>2. Consortium to develop human resources in the environmental field through collaboration among industry, government, academia, and civil society</b></p> <p>Matching developers of human resources with places of need in society and promoting and supporting the development and introduction of high-quality programs.</p> 	<p><b>3. Development of network of Asian universities pursuing human resources development in the environmental field</b></p>  <p>Enhance Asian graduate schools' capacity to develop environmental personnel</p>
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**3) Efforts by communities and local governments**

At the regional level, organizations such as boards of education; public halls, museums, and other community education facilities; local governments; NPOs; and local UNESCO associations are taking the lead in ESD-related activities in such fields as environmental education, education for international understanding, development

education, peace education, and human rights education. Among recent developments in environmental education, for example, are activities that contribute to building a sustainable society, such as efforts to carry on the traditional knowledge from times when people cohabited with nature through experiences of agriculture and everyday life and learning programs that explore ways to forge a better society by connecting the challenges facing the international community to daily living and regional issues. MOE is undertaking model programs that take environmental education as the starting point for developing human resources capable of leading sustainable community development, and organizes local ESD promotion forums to encourage the nationwide spread of its outcomes. Activities are also being pursued by Regional Centres of Expertise (RCE) around Japan, which act as hubs for projects in their regions. The number of RCEs in Japan has increased to 6—Greater Sendai, Yokohama, Chubu, Hyogo-Kobe, Okayama, and Kitakyushu—and they are tackling the various challenges faced by communities as they seek to become more sustainable while maintaining their diversity.

Numerous sustainable community development projects featuring energy and food to revitalize regions through exchanges between urban and rural areas are being pursued across Japan on the initiative of local governments and private-sector organizations. ESD is incorporated into the activity process as a venue for learning.

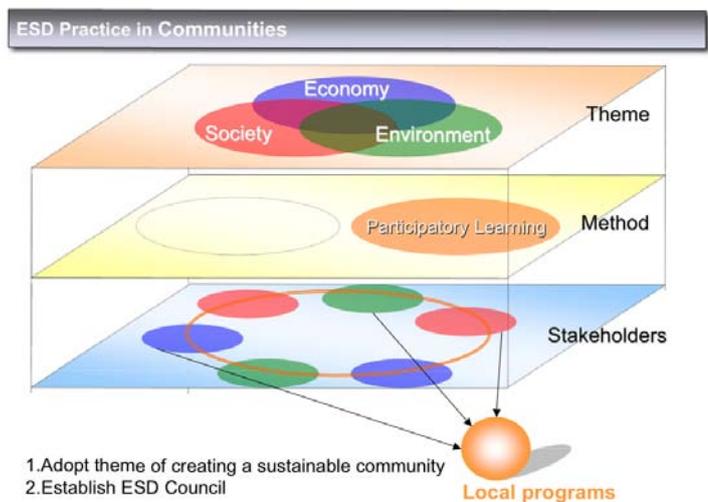
< Examples of ESD practice >

**MOE Program to Promote UNDESD**

In order to create models for ESD at the regional level, MOE provided support for three years, since FY2006, to 14 communities selected by open process that are putting ESD into practice to create sustainable communities.

Each community established an ESD Council involving diverse players (NPOs, local administrations, enterprises, schools, citizens, etc.) to consider and implement the “content” of education aimed at building a sustainable community. The pointers for developing ESD that these 14 communities gleaned from their practical experiences, on such matters as modalities of ESD and the links between them, have been published in the form of a handbook titled *38 Points on ESD Learned from Communities and How They Interrelate*, which will be used to promote ESD in the future.

At the regional block level, ESD Promotion Forums are held to promote the formation of networks among practitioners to disseminate examples of good community practice.



**4) Efforts by enterprises**

In Japan, as elsewhere, businesses are facing an increasing demand for social responsibility, leading many firms to establish dedicated departments to enhance their environmental and social credentials in their main lines of business and to pursue other activities that contribute to society. As part of this trend, one way in which businesses are putting ESD into practice is through rigorous employee training to raise awareness and encourage changes in conduct among those responsible for corporate social responsibility (CSR), so that social responsibility becomes an integral part of their everyday operations. As part of their CSR activities, businesses are also providing

support for human resource development in society (including assistance to school and community education projects), thus enabling society to benefit from their unique strengths and resources. Projects of this kind include cross-sector partnerships on ESD in which enterprises collaborate with educational institutions and NGOs to produce more effective educational outcomes.

**<Example of ESD practice>**

**Action by Nippon Keidanren (Japan Business Federation)**

- Nippon Keidanren's Committee on Corporate Philanthropy brings together CSR managers from almost 60 companies for monthly meetings to hear from a variety of guest speakers in order to deepen understanding of social issues and share information on innovative practices so that the participants can incorporate these into their own companies' CSR activities.

In July 2008, the organization published a report entitled "Contributing to Society in the Age of Corporate Social Responsibility" to highlight the CSR activities being undertaken by businesses in various fields.

The publication notes that one significance of employees' involvement in CSR activities is the development of a flexible and creative culture in the workplace and of a wider awareness among employees of human rights and environmental issues. In other words, CSR contributes to employee development and awareness, fostering people who can act to solve social issues.

- The Nippon Keidanren Committee on Nature Conservation is committed to developing partnerships through regular exchanges with and support for environmental NGOs.

In September 2007, the committee held a public symposium on ESD focusing on environmental education of employees as a priority for nature conservation, at which participants promoted understanding of ESD and shared information on how businesses pioneer ESD activities.

- The committee's ISO26000 Working Group has proposed that Japan's industrial sector should advocate ESD as an important element in the implementation guidance and that ESD should be cited as an international initiative for reference.

## 5) International action to promote ESD

The Government of Japan has contributed to the development of ESD around the world through its promotion, in collaboration with UNESCO, of the development and expansion of frameworks for the spread of grassroots ESD, including UNESCO's Associated Schools Project Network and RCEs, by contributing funds to UNESCO and the United Nations University.

MEXT contributes funds-in-trust to UNESCO to promote ESD and is engaged in international exchanges and cooperation projects through which both Japan and UNESCO address challenges, such as the development of sustainable societies and the human resources of the future, to further promote ESD.

Activities are also beginning at the grassroots level in the private sector. In Asia, such action includes the collection and sharing of information on examples of practice for the Asia Good ESD Practice Research Project (AGEPP), exchanges between communities engaging in ESD, and the provision of support for ESD strategy, planning, preparation, and implementation in collaboration with UNESCO and governments and NGOs in the Asia-Pacific region by the Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU).

### <Example of ESD practice>

#### **Activities of Regional Centres of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development (RCEs)**

- The concept of Regional Centres of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development (RCEs) was unveiled by the United Nations University in 2004.
- RCEs consist of a network of existing formal and informal educational institutions for promoting the spread of ESD in communities and regions.
- These networks consist of diverse stakeholders in various sectors and provide forums for discussion, cooperation, and information sharing to promote ESD. At the same time, they serve as knowledge bases for the accumulation of information and experience to support ESD activities.
- Since the establishment of the first seven RCEs in July 2005, the RCE network has continued to expand, and 62 regions around the world were registered as RCEs as of March 2009.

## **5. The Fruits of Japan's ESD Experiences: Message to the World**

### **○ Achievements of the First Half of the Decade and Challenges Ahead**

#### Achievements

During the first 4 years of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, the Government of Japan laid the groundwork for partnership between the public and private sectors. In addition to creating an organization of government ministries and agencies to promote ESD goals, it drafted a domestic action plan, organized round-table discussions to serve as a venue for dialogue among the organizations concerned, and implemented various measures.

A major achievement of this period was the affirmation of ESD's status as an important government policy in such plans as the Basic Promotional Plan for Education and the Twenty-first Century Environment Nation Strategy. Moreover, the creation of a sustainable society was included as a topic to be addressed in all subjects in MEXT's revised Courses of Study, and lessons reflecting the principles of ESD became part of compulsory education.

A practical model for implementing ESD concepts at the regional level and in institutions of higher education has been developed, and the Associated School Project Network, Regional Centres of Expertise (RCEs), and other networks for implementing ESD programs are growing. Regional networks to promote ESD established as a result of private-sector initiatives have also been spreading.

#### Challenges Ahead

Though progress has been achieved in disseminating ESD, continued efforts must be made to reach as many people as possible. In undertaking this task, a straightforward explanation of what ESD entails should be provided, while taking into account its connection with ongoing educational activities being undertaken locally.

Closer partnerships among government ministries and agencies and other is vital for promoting ESD, and efforts must be made to strengthen the system for cooperation and to implement policies toward this end. Other remaining tasks include raising the status of ESD in government policies and taking a more comprehensive approach that incorporates ESD principles in teaching individual topics on the environment and international understanding.

## ○ **Goals for the Second Half of the Decade**

### Evaluation and Revision

In considering the measures to take in the second half of the decade, it is important to evaluate the extent of the spread of ESD initiatives, changes in the attitudes and actions of relevant organizations, and the degree to which Japan and the rest of the world have become more sustainable societies. How to evaluate the effectiveness of ESD initiatives will be discussed with the participation of experts from a wide range of fields. Activities in the first five years of the decade, up to 2009, concerned issues in the priority fields of the environment and development and were founded on three key components—the environment, economy, and society. In 2010, Japan's Action Plan is scheduled to be revised in the light of the results achieved..

### Dissemination

The government will renew its calls to take a comprehensive approach grounded on ESD principles to educational and other programs on individual topics related to sustainable development, including the environment and international understanding, that were launched in response to ESD and that are currently being implemented locally. It will also strive to improve the visibility of ESD by setting up a register system of ESD programs, to develop a support system, and to choose projects to serve as models in the aim of giving concrete form to ESD and encouraging its dissemination.

Further efforts will be made to enhance awareness of ESD through awareness raising to and training programs for those including administrative personnel, boards of education, and educators.

### Fostering Closer Alliances

The government will promote ESD in primary and secondary schools and introduce it into teacher training courses and training programs for teachers when they renew teaching licenses. It will also take steps to promote joint community-school ESD initiatives, including school and community support headquarters and stakeholder conferences.

To promote ESD in higher education, collaboration among universities and various sectors will be fostered through the expansion of the environmental graduate school network, the formation of a consortium among industry, government, academia, and civil society, and other measures.

At the community level, the government will support partnerships among and initiatives

by individuals and organizations in the community, such as forums to promote ESD. It will also bolster ESD programs as well as the ESD promotion mechanism at public halls, civic centers, children's centers, libraries, museums, and other social education facilities. Steps will be taken to train and deploy coordinators to promote ESD in the community.

The promotion of ESD at the global level will encompass efforts to further expand UNESCO's Associated School Project Network, RCEs, and ProSPER.Net (Promotion of Sustainability in Postgraduate Education and Research Network) and to establish an ESD register and certification system for international collaborations.

### ○ **Toward the Global Promotion of ESD**

It is important that the government create a system to facilitate the participation of and partnership among various individuals and organizations at the national and local levels and train and dispatch ESD coordinators to various regions so that ESD can be promoted by coalitions of diverse individuals and organizations.

The promotion of ESD principles that are rooted in the community and that can bring about change will be dependent on the creation of such a system that encourages the use of local resources, including natural, cultural, historical, and industrial resources. It will also require the creation of participatory, experiential, and problem-solving models, and a system that brings together people from various walks of life.

One important means of disseminating ESD is by pooling the knowledge of the countries and organizations concerned, which can be achieved by listing and categorizing outstanding ESD programs, compiling a summary of good practices, and making this information easily accessible.

In view of the above and of discussions that have unfolded at UNESCO, the summary of the proceedings of the International Forum on ESD Dialogue held in Tokyo in 2008 included the following three recommendations agreed by participating countries:

- To develop "model projects" that can be undertaken jointly by multiple stakeholders.
- To establish a framework for cooperation among all stakeholders, including private companies.
- To increase the number and quality of UNESCO Associated Schools.

Reaching these goals will require cooperation with UNESCO and efforts by member countries to uncover "model projects" and undertake programs to disseminate ESD. Japan is currently considering the creation of a registration and certification system for ESD

initiatives as one method for achieving this.

To produce concrete results, we must set out priority goals and an action plan for achieving them, as well as undertaking periodic reviews to confirm that the measures in the plan are being implemented. It is also necessary to formulate meaningful indicators for measuring progress.

With the start of the second half of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, individual countries must step up their efforts to incorporate the principles, values, and practices of sustainable development into all facets of schooling and learning. Japan will continue to collaborate and cooperate with UNESCO and member countries to contribute to the global promotion of ESD.