

Speech of the Director-General on the occasion of the information meeting with the Executive Board – excerpt on Rio+20 outcomes, 10 July 2012

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I turn now to the second main point on our agenda -- the *United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development*.

I wish to thank once again the Chair of the Executive Board for her leadership and hard work in the run-up and during the Rio+20 Conference – this made a true difference.

The Delegations of the United Kingdom, Germany and Nigeria asked about the implications of the Conference for UNESCO, while the Delegation of Japan enquired about specific results for sustainable development in the sciences and education.

Let me respond in a comprehensive manner.

The Conference adopted on 22 June, after lengthy negotiations, an Outcome Document, *The Future We Want*.

This Document has been criticised from many sides as failing to define new commitments.

Let me be clear.

Rio+20 placed sustainability through all three pillars firmly onto the global agenda, and the Outcome Document is a significant result with far-reaching implications.

I wish to underline the great role of Brazil in the success of the Conference.

I take this opportunity also to commend the UN Secretary-General for the leadership and vision he brought to Rio+20.

As the United Nations Secretary-General said, Rio+20 is not “*an end but a beginning*.”

Despite all differences and difficulties, this Conference brought the world together -- to agree on problems, identify areas for action and set in motion a process for undertaking them.

In this, it succeeded in spades.

Rio+20 saw agreement by a wide range of actors, Governments and civil society, on some 700 voluntary commitments.

The Outcome Document contains the first agreed wording on the ‘green economy’ concept.

It recognizes the need to go beyond GDP in measuring sustainable development.

A Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production was also adopted.

The Outcome Document agreed on the need for sustainable development goals, to be integrated into the global development agenda after 2015.

This result is strategic.

An open working group of thirty representatives will be established at the 67th session of the UN General Assembly to this end.

The UN Secretary-General will provide input and support the group through an interagency team – in which UNESCO will seek to participate.

In this respect, I participated in Rio's first *High Level Roundtable*, co-chaired by Prince Albert II of Monaco and His Excellency Armando Emilio Guebuza, President of Mozambique -- where I called for concrete sustainable development goals, building on the Millennium Development Goals.

Rio+20 took also two decisions with institutional relevance – to strengthen the *United Nations Environment Programme*, and to establish a *High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development*.

UNESCO was deeply involved in all deliberations and in the success of Rio.

Before the Conference, we organized the *Forum on Science and Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Development* with the *International Council for Science* and other partners, to define a new approach to research for sustainability.

During the Conference, UNESCO led three Official Side-events. The first concerned “Educating for a Sustainable Future,” co-organized with the Government of Sweden and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan. The second was “Know our Ocean, Protect our Marine Treasures, Empower Ocean Citizens.” The third focused on the 2013 *International Year of Water Cooperation*, which UNESCO is entrusted by the UN General Assembly to lead.

These generated strong visibility for UNESCO and our objectives.

I attended also the “Women Leaders’ Summit on the Future Women Want,” hosted by UN Women and led by President Dilma Rousseff, to integrate gender equality into sustainable development.

At the *Chief Executives Board Roundtable* – under the title “UN System: Together for the Future We Want” -- chaired by the UN Secretary-General, I made the case for education as the basis of sustainability.

In addition, UNESCO participated in a wide range of other events – for instance, on “Social science support to policies promoting the social dimension of sustainable development in a changing climate,” co-organized with the Norwegian National Commission, a seminar on “Culture and Sustainability,” co-organized by the Brazilian Ministry of Culture and the *United Cities and Local Governments*, on “Broadband and

ICTs for smart, inclusive and sustainable societies,” organized by the Brazilian Ministry of Communication and the *International Telecommunications Union*, as well as on the importance of water, organised with Finland.

Action *inside* the conference halls was backed up by a powerful communications campaign *outside* -- we lit up Rio with our messages, thanks to the support of UNESCO Goodwill Ambassadors, Nizan Guanaes and Oskar Metsavaht,

This included a strong presence in the media.

In the run-up to Rio, I signed five opinion pieces in the Japanese daily, *Mainichi*, and three articles in the Brazilian *O Globo*. I was honoured to co-sign an article with Lena Ek, Swedish Minister for the Environment, and Hirofumi Hirano, Japanese Minister of Education, published in the Swedish newspaper, *Sydsvenska Dagbladet* and also in *Folha de San Paulo*.

In reply to your question, for UNESCO, the messages from Rio+20 are clear.

Let me start with education.

Rio+20 reaffirmed universal access to primary education and quality education at all levels as “*essential for achieving sustainable development*.”

It recognized the vital importance of education for sustainable development.

In reply to the question of the Delegation of Japan, I will present to the 190th Executive Board, options for transforming the *UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development* into an institutionalized process beyond 2014. Options may include consideration of a second decade, a programme framework, or a coordination framework. I look forward to the discussions of the Executive Board, to elaborate a proposal for the General Conference.

In addition, Rio shone a strong light on programmes in “*entrepreneurship and business skills training, professional, technical and vocational training and lifelong learning*.” The importance of non-formal education was underlined. All of this endorses UNESCO’s commitment to quality education and education for sustainable development.

I take this opportunity to thank the Government of Japan for offering to host a conference on Education for Sustainable Development to close the UN Decade in 2014.

Rio recognized also the centrality of the sciences for sustainability.

This was a true breakthrough in global approaches to sustainable development, to which UNESCO contributed. The Outcome Document underlined, indeed, the need for a stronger science-policy interface, and to enhance national scientific and technological capacities, along with technology transfers to developing countries. Rio+20 recognized also the challenge of sustainably managing the ocean. The Outcome Document highlighted the need for networks of observation and knowledge management – for instance, regarding, ocean acidification.

These points translated into concrete policy commitments that build on UNESCO leadership.

I mentioned earlier our leading role in the UN Secretary-General's *Scientific Advisory Board*.

This is clear recognition of UNESCO's leadership on a core sustainability issue. Also in Rio, the *International Atomic Energy Agency* announced it will launch an *Ocean Acidification International Coordination Centre*. UNESCO's *Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission* pushed for such a centre in the run-up to Rio, and the IOC will participate on its Advisory Board.

I see this as a good example of our leadership, working in partnership with other agencies.

As you recall, I initiated the idea of a *Global Oceans Compact* at the Chief Executives Board meeting last year in Nairobi. Developed with substantial UNESCO input and that of other agencies, the concept was adopted by the Chief Executives Board earlier this year. We are now discussing with the UN Secretary-General the launch of the *Global Oceans Compact* during the closure of the *Yeosu World Expo on Oceans* on 12 August, 2012.

UNESCO's *Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission* will play a key role in taking this forward.

UNESCO is also a partner of the *Future Earth Initiative* that was launched in Rio. This is a ten-year initiative to develop knowledge for sustainability from all scientific disciplines. This is a strong example of UNESCO contributing and partnering to 'sustainability sciences' in real ways across the world.

Recognition of this role is a strategic outcome from Rio – the result of 18 months work before the Conference, and much longer engagement across all sciences.

Another success is that Rio+20 highlighted the importance of ICTs and broadband for sustainable development – for facilitating the flow of information between governments and the public, and for promoting knowledge exchange and capacity building.

I would remind you here of the importance of the work undertaken to reach these agreements by the *Broadband Commission for Digital Development*, co-led by UNESCO and the ITU.

In the field of culture, the results are mixed.

The Outcome Document notes the importance of cultural diversity, cultural tourism and also indigenous knowledge. It recognizes that "*people are at the centre of sustainable development*" and the need for "*holistic and integrated approaches to sustainable development*." The Document, however, does not refer as such to the importance of culture for development.

Rio shows we still have work ahead to make our case for culture and development – this is especially important as we debate the post-2105 global development agenda.

I remain encouraged by the resolutions agreed in the UN General Assembly and by the strong momentum that exists, on which we must build.

We must continue also to promote our messages on the ethics of development and the social aspects of sustainability, essential for respect and implementation of human rights.

Gender equality must also lie at the heart of sustainable development.

This message guides the *Global Partnership on Girls' and Women's Education*, whose first anniversary we celebrated on 25 May with many prominent participants, including the Executive Director of *UN Women*, Michelle Bachelet, the Minister of Primary Education of Chad, and Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands, *UNESCO Special Envoy on Literacy for Development*.

As Mr. Sha Zukang, Secretary-General of Rio+20, admitted -- not everybody is happy with the Outcome Document.

But I believe Rio+20 will be remembered as a starting point and not the finish line.

No big commitments were made, but there were *big ideas* – in education, in sciences for sustainability, on the ocean, in ICTs.

The sustainability agenda is now firmly in place, in national agendas across the world.

I see Rio+20 as a call to action to UNESCO.