

"Report on the 66th, United Nations (UN) Department of Public Information (DPI) /
Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Conference"

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Overview:

The 66th, United Nations (UN) Department of Public Information (DPI) / Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Conference was held in the ancient city of Gyeongju, Republic of Korea from 30 May to 1 June 2016. The Conference title was "Education for Global Citizenship: Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals Together." The Conference took place in the first year of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by United Nations (UN) Member States in September 2015 to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure human rights and prosperous and fulfilling lives for all, as part of new sustainable development agenda to be achieved by 2030. 2016, was globally unprecedented opportunity to spark these transformational changes, following also on the successful conclusion of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 21st, Conference of Parties (COP) agreement in Paris in December 2015.

Co-sponsored by the NGO / DPI Executive Committee, the Conference was an important opportunity to mobilize global civil society around the Sustainable Development Goals. The 66th, UN DPI / NGO Conference was the first in the Conference's history which was held in Asia. The first 60 Conferences took place in New York at the United Nations Headquarters, as was the 65th, Conference. In between, the Conference was held in Paris (2008), Mexico City (2009), Melbourne (2010) and Bonn (2011).

Purpose:

Global citizenship is no longer an ideal, but rather a requirement for creating a peaceful, just, and environmentally sustainable world of interconnected societies. According to the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), global citizenship education "aims to empower learners to assume active roles to face and resolve global challenges and to become proactive contributors to a more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive and secure world." Education for global citizenship should support innovative pedagogies aligned with these ideals and the Sustainable Development Goals. The purpose of this Conference, rooted in Sustainable Development Goal number 4, was to harness strategies, expertise and resources across the widest spectrum of civil society to unleash a range of education initiative that ensure inclusive, safe and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Three pillars of i) formal education, ii) informal education and training, and iii) advocacy and public information were examined as means to correct gender, ability, social, economic and other inequalities that create or perpetuate marginalization and disenfranchisement, and thus, hinder achievement of goal 4, and each of the additional sixteen Sustainable Development Goals. The expertise and reach of the United Nations

Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Academic Impact initiative (UNAI) and other partners within and beyond the United Nations system helped bridge inclusive discussions across the spectrum of education communities. At the 2016 World Government Summit, UN Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki Moon announced "Our challenge now is to bring to life Agenda 2030 and the Paris Accord and to turn these important agreements into realities for people on the ground." To make this vision into reality and achieve the ambitious goals of SDGs through education, participants brought in, shared and rigorously refined their ideas and perspectives at this Conference.

Hosts:

The Hosts were Republic of Korea, the NGO Relations and Advocacy Section of the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI), the (NGO) / DPI Executive Committee, which represents the NGOs associated with DPI, and the National Organizing Committee of Korea.

Venue:

The Conference was held in the City of Gyeongju, located on the South-Eastern part of Korean Peninsula. Gyeongju was the capital city of the Silla dynasty (57BC-935AD), which achieved unification of the Korean Peninsula for the first time in history, and was a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site. The Conference was held at Hwabaek International Convention Center (HICO), which offers state-of-the-art facilities for meeting and exhibits.

Program & Format:

The conference Planning Committee was responsible for developing all elements of the program which was include opening and closing plenary sessions, interactive roundtables, workshops organized by Conference participants. NGOs at large were invited to offer their support in organizing the Conference, and to propose workshops, exhibits, off-site and side events inspired by the spirit of this concept note, to enrich the Conference program and to inform the action agenda.

Roundtables:

There were 4 roundtables in this Conference which were as follows:

- No. 1) Roundtable Theme = The Right to Accessible, Safe and Inclusive Learning Spaces ==> Education must leave no one behind, and be accessible to all throughout life through quality learning opportunities. Too many of the world's students and potential learners are explicitly denied, or subtly pushed away from, educational and training opportunities for reasons including their gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, language, location, religion, sexual orientation, age, ability (or disability), or poverty.

A combination of factors including bullying, discrimination, micro aggressions, gender-based violence and lack of facilities such as classrooms, teaching and learning materials, water and sanitation, and lack of financing deny education and learning opportunities to many students, including 775 million adults, a disproportionate number of them women, who lack minimum literacy skills. This session explored how the education community can ensure that all individuals have the opportunity to learn and grow to their maximum potential as stated in Sustainable Development Goal 4, and why this was crucial to achieving all of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The roundtable recommended concrete formal actions, such as through national education plans and international frameworks for policies and cooperation to improve education, and offered informal approaches including training, mentoring, social mobilization, building public awareness, and public and private partnerships to narrow access and quality gaps in education.

- No. 2) Roundtable Theme = STEAM Should Power the Sustainable Development Goals ==> Expanding opportunities for scientific training is an essential component of economic development for all nations. Science, technology, engineering, art, and math, or "STEAM," is an interdisciplinary learning model that offers new opportunities for creating sustainable models of production and consumption, public health, urban design and infrastructure, water distribution, and food and energy production.

Despite these multiple benefits, STEAM faces critical, interlinked financing and access gaps. Science, technology, engineering and math are stubbornly difficult to access for many in developed countries, and in particular for girls. The technology gap, and financing for it, grows exponentially in developing countries and is particularly acute for marginalized groups. Art and design in their purest form also suffer from a lack of investment, leaving questions about the value governments and communities put on creative thinking as a driver for innovation and problem solving.

This roundtable explored practical investment, policy and advocacy strategies to expand access to science, technology, engineering, art and math education that "leaves no one behind" and proactively reaches out to girls and women. Best-practice examples of STEAM education and information provided to socially and culturally vulnerable people including girls, women and minorities were presented, highlighting how innovation can help confront the most pressing current research challenges facing the Sustainable Development Goals.

Advances in information and communication technology (ICT) that offer major new opportunities for the delivery of innovative STEAM curricula to schools and educational centers around the world, rich and poor, were discussed.

- No. 3) Roundtable Theme = Children and Youth: Tomorrow's Global Citizens Today ==> This Conference acknowledged the centrality of SDG 4 as a driver for transformational change, and the primacy of educating children as the starting point for achieving all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Enrollment in primary education in developing countries has reached 91 per cent, but 58 million children of primary school age, and 63 million children of lower secondary age remain out of school, with Sub-Saharan Africa and conflict zones representing stubborn pockets of exclusion.

This roundtable aimed to galvanize global commitment to ensure that all girls and boys get twelve years of free, publicly-funded formal quality education, nine of which should be compulsory, and to discuss effective strategies to invest in early childhood care and education (ECCE) programs and services. The session focused on concrete ways to ensure quality education for children in armed conflict and post-conflict situations including effective measures to deal with trauma and other impediments, as well as peace education to help avoid conflict. Formal and informal education together with advocacy for global citizenship which puts a premium on building a culture of peace and social well-being for all were explored. The session also offered approaches to avoid breaks in education due to natural disasters and public health emergencies.

The roundtable also examined the disparity in the amounts that governments spend on military and education sectors, respectively, and highlighted the economic and social benefits that higher budget allocations for primary and secondary education in particular promise.

- No. 4) Roundtable Theme = Global Citizens as Stewards of the Planet: Energy, Environment and Climate Change ==> In today's era of climate change, global pollution, natural resource depletion, and threats to biodiversity, societies are reassessing the value placed on the natural environment and exploring how formal and informal education, training and grassroots advocacy can strengthen humankind's capacities to exist on this planet.

This roundtable explored why cultivating empathy and a scientific appreciation for the natural world, environmental justice, and responsibility towards future generations must be at the core of education for global citizenship. It featured the voices and teachings of indigenous cultures to help identify the values and skill sets necessary for sustainable production and consumption that will protect both life below water and life on land. Indigenous teachings affirmed reverence for "all our relations," the kinship of all life. These and other traditional values and ecological knowledge systems were juxtaposed with environmental science and new approaches to conserving natural wealth and capital to address a range of looming challenges, including climate change and population growth.

In addition, this roundtable addressed the pivotal role that increased access to sustainable energy would have in ensuring each person's right to education, health, and healthy environment.

- ((Special Roundtable)) : Roundtable Theme = Local Development and Poverty Eradication for global Citizenship (Sharing the Saemaul Undong experience from Korea and other developing countries as a case study in eradicating poverty and nation building in support of the Sustainable Development Goals) ==> Korea has a unique experience of rising from the tribulations of colonization and war to build a democratic nation with a thriving economy, and a deep respect for human rights. Saemaul Undong originated from the Canaan Farmers School as an agriculture pioneer movement and the Korean government adopted it as a national poverty eradication campaign focusing on education for citizenship. Saemaul Undong emphasized:

1) poverty eradication

2) Improvement of health services and child care

- 3) Empowerment of local community
- 4) Revitalization of community leadership and intergenerational leadership
- 5) Women's participation in the community
- 6) Microfinancing for villages

Gyeongsangbuk-do Province was hosting this year's Conference and was known as the place where the Saemaul Undong originated.

The session shared how this civic movement contributed to economic development and improved human rights and brought awareness for environmental sustainability in the Korean context and how it could be applied around the world today.

Workshops:

Different Sponsoring Organizations presented 46 workshops in this Conference.

Participants: The 65th, DPI / NGO Conference at United Nations Headquarters in New York City was attended by an estimated 2,200 NGO representatives from some 700 NGOs hailing from an estimated 100 countries. 66th, UN DPI / NGO Conference was the first in its history which was held in Asia with more than 2500 participants from more than 100 nations world-wide. While the Conference was open to all civil society organizations, the following groups were automatically pre-approved for registration.

- NGOs associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI); in Consultative Status with the United Nations Economics and Social Council (ECOSOC); in Consultative Status with the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO).

- Students and faculty from academic institutions that were members of the United Nations Academic Impact Initiative (UNAI).

- * The most distinguished guests in this Conference were UN Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki Moon and his wife plus the Prime Minister of Republic of Korea.

Conclusion:

The Sustainable Development Goals and Paris Agreement provided a comprehensive global action agenda for the years 2016 to 2030. These intensely negotiated agreements offer the international community a bold, people-centered and planet-sensitive development framework that requires transformational changes in governance and institutional performance. This Conference provided an inclusive space focused on education for global citizenship as the key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Conference Outcome: Attendees at the Conference finalized an education action agenda to mobilize civil society- its local and international NGOs, networks, and activists, as well as academics, educators, policy makers, businesses and youth, reflecting the aspirations and ambitions of all global citizens, in the spirit of leaving non one behind. This agenda was drafted through a global multi-stakeholder consultation process, leading up to and during the Conference. The agenda was offered for adoption at the final plenary session of the Conference, and was shared widely with civil society as well as UN Member States, UN organizations and the UN Secretary General. The Gyeongju Action Plan is as follows:

The 66th, UN DPI / NGO CONFERENCE

Gyeongju Action Plan

"Education for Global Citizenship: Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals Together"

Gyeongju, Republic of Korea

30 May - 1 June 2016

We, the NGO participants of the 66th, United Nations DPI / NGO Conference, adopt this Action Plan so that all may realize the aspirations of the 2030 Global Agenda for Sustainable Development. Education is a human right, essential to well-being and dignity, and is key to achieving Agenda 2030. Further, an ethos of global citizenship is required in order to fulfill this bold, people-centered, universal, and planet-sensitive development framework.

In order to achieve Agenda 2030, we confirm:

* The importance of Sustainable Development Goal 4: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong opportunities for all."

* "Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship ... "

* In the spirit of global citizenship, in which our primary identity is that of human beings, all people, regardless of circumstances, "should have access to life-long learning opportunities that help them acquire the knowledge and skills needed to exploit opportunities and to participate fully in society."

* The importance of universal inclusion, acknowledging that the absence of a particular group or identity in text can lead to the exclusion of that group or identity in policy. We have made a conscious decision not to highlight any particular group or identity to ensure full inclusion and equal treatment of all people - especially those in positions of specific vulnerability and marginalization. It is unacceptable that diverse group memberships and identities have been used to deny the right to learn or otherwise marginalize individuals. In education, as in all things, the basis of non-discrimination is, and ought to be, our common humanity.

* In addition to literacy and numeracy, education must advance the cause of global citizenship which:

- promotes integrated development of the whole person emotionally, ethically, intellectually, physically, socially, and spiritually; imbued with an understanding of our roles, rights and responsibilities for the common good in service to humanity and the advancement of a culture of peace, non-violence, freedom, justice, and equality;

- inculcates a sense of care for the earth, reverence for the interdependent kinship of all life, and stewardship of all ecological systems for future generations;

- strengthens the societal relationships among individuals, institutions, communities, states, humanity, and the planet;

- "empowers learners to assume active roles to face and resolve global challenges and to become proactive contributors to a more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, and secure world";

- nurtures a sense of solidarity and empathy in order to end poverty, protect the planet, ensure human rights, and foster prosperous and fulfilling lives for all.

* The pivotal role that arts, engineering, the humanities, mathematics, natural and social sciences, and technology must play to catalyze innovation and fulfill the 2030 Agenda. We further affirm the value of interdisciplinary education as a driver for creative expression and innovation.

* Education for global citizenship is an essential strategy to address global challenges as well as to promote gender equality, facilitate the eradication of poverty and hunger, build skills, eliminate corruption, and prevent violence, including violent extremism. It promotes truly sustainable production and consumption, mitigating climate change and its effects, protecting our waters and biodiversity, and preserving indigenous knowledge.

* The importance of the inclusion and participation of young people in decisions that affect their learning processes since educational systems have a profound, distinct, and lasting impact on them.

* Local knowledge and best practices should be incorporated into practical educational strategies for resilient communities and sustainable agriculture. Particular targeted efforts should be made to include and empower rural people living in poverty, women, and disadvantaged groups through education. Community-based organizations must be given authentic power and capacity to prioritize needs, select projects, manage funds, and take action.

* This gathering builds on previous foundational initiatives including, but not limited to, the 2013 UNESCO Forum on Global Citizenship Education: Preparing Learners for the Challenge of the 21 st, Century; the 2014 UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development: Learning Today for a Sustainable Future; and the 2015 World Education Forum: Transforming Lives through Education.

We commit to:

* An education based on creative and critical thinking that enables all people to actively contribute to political and developmental processes in a complex, and diverse global society both within and beyond their borders.

* An education that teaches conflict resolution, a deep appreciation for diversity, ethical reasoning, gender equality, human rights and responsibilities, interdependence, multilingual and multicultural competence, social justice, sustainable development, and values.

* Utilize the pillars of formal education, informal education and training, and advocacy and public information as means to reduce inequalities that impede the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, most particularly Goal 4.

* Strengthen diverse civil-society-led coalitions around the world that contribute to the development of education for global citizenship.

* Work with UNESCO Clearinghouse on Global Citizenship Education, the Global Education First Initiative (GEFI) and the United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI) for the next 12 months, at which point a review of activities will take place.

* Support Member States and the United Nations in their efforts to "provid[e] inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels - early childhood, primary, secondary, tertiary, technical and vocational training."

* Promote educational skills for social entrepreneurship and the sharing of appropriate information and communication technologies.

* Enhance educational understandings of "tradition" in a manner that preserves each culture's unique perspectives and principles and is consistent with human rights and global citizenship.

* Collaborate to formulate a comprehensive and succinct definition of global citizenship that can be used in curricula around the world.

* Harness strategies, expertise, and resources across the widest spectrum of civil society to unleash a range of educational initiatives that ensure inclusive, safe, and equitable quality education, and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all people.

* Work at the local level, engaging parents and community leaders, to formulate plans to incorporate education for global citizenship in educational systems.

- * Strengthen intergenerational partnerships in all aspects of our work.
- * Translate and disseminate this document in multiple languages and implement it in diverse cultural contexts.

We urge Member States and the United Nations to:

- * Prioritize education in policy and practice.
- * Support enactment by the United Nations for an International Day of Education that would serve as a means to promote education for global citizenship, learning for civic engagement, and literacy for grassroots empowerment.
- * provide an education that will enable all people to actively contribute to the political and developmental processes in a complex, interlinked and diverse society.
- * Re-think current models and structures of participation in decision-making processes at all levels.
- * Allocate a greater percentage of public revenues to education, particularly through the reduction of global military expenditures.
- * Provide adequate resources to address all the SDGs.
- * In furtherance of Agenda 2030, promote the right to access information. "Access to information and sharing and creation of knowledge contributes significantly to strengthening economic, social and cultural development, thus helping all countries to reach the internationally agreed development goals."
- * Adopt implementation approaches to education which respect local specificities including the political, social, cultural, and historical dimensions without discrimination.
- * Increase sustainable and renewable energy to ensure all people's access to education, health, environmental sustainability, and planet-friendly development.
- * Explore ways and means by which education for global citizenship can be integrated into curricula and the agenda for education.
- * Continue the important work the United Nations is doing in this field through, for example UNESCO, as well as initiatives such as GEFI and UNAI.
- * Promote experiential learning, interdisciplinary studies, online learning, and intercultural exchanges to prepare students and educators to become global citizens.
- * Devise and implement effective capacity-building programs for education practitioners.
- * Create the position of Secretary-General's Envoy to Civil Society to act as a liaison between the Secretary-General's Office and Civil Society.

Therefore, be it resolved,

We, the people at the 66th, United Nations DPI / NGO Conference, will continue to work in furtherance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with a particular emphasis on promoting education for global citizenship.

We thank the people and the Government of the Republic of Korea, the Province of Gyeongsangbuk-do, and the City of Gyeongju for their heartfelt and warm welcome and for hosting the 66th, United Nations DPI / NGO Conference and for their efforts to promote education for global citizenship and to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Respectfully submitted by: Dr. SHAHRAM - DEHBOZORGI