

WCC-2016-Res-084-EN

Environmental education and how to naturalise the spaces in educational centres for healthy development and a better childhood connection with nature

POINTING OUT that to conserve our natural environment it is necessary to know what we are trying to conserve, bearing in mind that human beings are highly dependent on and are an integral part of the nature that surrounds them and are linked to its evolution and functioning;

AWARE that social changes towards sustainable development require more complex processes than the supply of information and knowledge;

CONSIDERING that numerous scientific studies have proven that growing up in contact with nature provides countless essential resources for an optimal level of emotional and physical health and well-being, especially for child development from a very early age, stimulating the senses, increasing powers of observation, reasoning and analysis, and reducing the risk of childhood obesity, certain pneumonic diseases and other pathologies that affect children in particular;

ALSO RECOGNISING that children's emotional connection with the natural environment fosters respect for and awareness of nature, which has a positive impact on conservation and provides the opportunity for an increase in environmental awareness;

OBSERVING that in many countries there is an unstoppable trend in urban growth and that educational centres in urban areas often consists of buildings with concrete playgrounds and sports facilities;

NOTING that playgrounds designed to allow children to release the energy built up in the classroom should be open areas where the children continue to learn, exchanging and enjoying experiences, and that playgrounds should therefore provide the elements enabling this to be put into practice;

CONSIDERING that environmental education that includes significant science learning is one of the mainstays of nature conservation and that it should be an international school of thought and action, so that future generations can take on and understand the sustainable management of natural resources;

OBSERVING that despite the fact that most national educational systems include in a crosscutting manner a subject that encompasses concepts of environmental education, the reality demonstrates that this is not effective and that an educational project should be established – a sound, effective programme that includes information on the immediate natural environment; and

RECALLING Resolution 5.101 *Child's right to connect with nature and to a healthy environment* and Resolution 5.039 *Healthy parks healthy people* (Jeju, 2012) and Resolution 3.025 *Education and communication in the IUCN Programme* (Bangkok, 2004);

RECOGNISING the "Global action program on education for sustainable development (ESD)" as a worldwide framework to generate and scale-up concrete actions in ESD and make a substantial contribution to the post-2015 agenda;

ALSO RECOGNISING that environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level; that at the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes; that states shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available; and that effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided;

RECALLING IUCN Resolution 4.040 *Conservation of geodiversity and geological heritage* (Barcelona, 2008) stating that geological heritage constitutes a natural heritage with cultural, aesthetic, landscape, economic and/or intrinsic values that it is necessary to preserve and transmit to future generations;

The World Conservation Congress, at its session in Hawai'i, United States of America, 1-10 September 2016:

1. ASKS the Director General and the Commission on Education and Communication to urge the State Members to use all means necessary to make children's day-to-day environment, especially schools, as natural as possible in order to promote connection with nature, particularly in urban areas, so that children grow up in contact with nature, aware of the benefits that nature and its conservation provide them with as part of their personal development;
2. URGES IUCN Members to:
 - a. recognise the educational value of natural environments and the possibilities that nature provides as a first-rate educational setting;
 - b. recognise the importance for children of a connection with nature, and to provide educational centres with the tools required for including natural elements in their facilities, to enable and promote interaction with the natural environment;
 - c. promote curriculum development that brings children as close as possible to natural environments;
 - d. restore and create natural settings as indispensable places for children's games and learning and nature conservation;
 - e. include in educational systems environmental education as a non-crosscutting subject, which offers children the possibility of coming into contact with natural environments, species and areas, and of studying the science regarding the main threats to biodiversity as well as geodiversity and the possible solutions to create awareness about the integral conservation of nature and natural heritage;
 - f. adopt teacher training systems to build the capacities of schools and promote education in environmental values and science literacy, allowing for growth and ratifying children's right to grow up in a healthy environment; and
 - g. include activities in schools and surroundings such as excursions for the better understanding of biodiversity and geodiversity; use of building materials from schools to teach geology and in open spaces to develop botanical and rocks museums;
3. ENCOURAGES all IUCN Members to:
 - a. cooperate actively and work to ensure that environmental education has a fundamental place in children's education;
 - b. provide educational institutions with mechanisms for ambitious guidelines that set out areas of work aimed at including knowledge of nature in curricular objectives; and
 - c. require, as appropriate, that staff teaching environmental education are trained and have specific means to allow them to carry out their work without the deprivation of, or overlap with, other professional rights or duties, as a result of incompatibility or overloading of functions.