

Positioning RCEs
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Background:

- 1 In December 2002, based on a proposal that first came to light in Johannesburg at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted resolution 57/254 to put in place a United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), spanning from 2005 to 2014. The overall goal of the DESD is to integrate the principles, values, and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning. The basic vision of the DESD is to realize a world where everyone has the opportunity to benefit from education and learn the values, behavior and lifestyles required for a sustainable future and for positive societal transformation. In 2003, as preparations for the DESD unfolded, the United Nations University Institute of Advanced Studies (UNU-IAS) launched a programme on education for sustainable development (ESD) and developed the initial concept for the RCEs.

RCE Mission & Goals:

- 2 The RCE network is a multistakeholder network that translates the global vision of the DESD into local realities. Underlying the concept of the RCEs are the four thrusts of ESD: improving access and retention in quality basic education for children and young people; reorienting existing education programmes to address sustainability; increasing public understanding and awareness of sustainability; and providing training to all sectors of society.
- 3 RCEs are committed to building a global learning space on sustainable development issues while helping people in local communities and regions learn the values, behaviors and practices needed to create a sustainable future. By acting as the premium 'global learning space' on sustainable development, the RCE network will measurably contribute to building a sustainable future at local, regional and international levels.
- 4 An RCE is characterized by a well defined system of governance and management, a contribution to the transformation of the current education and training systems, an emphasis on enhancing collaborative partnerships and an inclusion of a research component in its ESD activities.
- 5 RCEs aspire to achieve the goals of the DESD by building an innovative platform for multi-sectoral and interdisciplinary information-sharing, dialogue and collaboration at local and global levels. A diverse group of stakeholders participate in the work of each RCE. Collaborative undertakings within and across RCEs include transformative education, action research and policy work to address the challenges of sustainable development (SD).
- 6 In 2011, citing the ongoing crisis of unsustainable development, the community reaffirmed its commitment to helping transition towards a sustainable and resilient society by inspiring innovation and

positive change through transformative learning. At the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012, the role of education was highlighted once more as a tool to prepare people for the age of climate change and as a way of continuing to grow resilient and just society.

The RCE role in sustainability-change processes:

- 7 RCEs create communities of learning on sustainable development issues, helping people in local communities and regions learn the values, behaviors, knowledge and practices needed to create a sustainable future. These communities act as agents of change, implementing national, regional and global sustainable development processes, and offering critical input, policy recommendations and action plans on ESD and SD.
- 8 The innovative, situated learning taking place in local communities through RCE support is a key element in building sustainable development. Those efforts, combined with the cross-regional collaboration of the RCE community make the RCE network a key resource within global sustainability-related processes. Engagement in global processes by RCEs helps create and identify synergies necessary to address the challenges of SD, and provide all stakeholders with a critical opportunity to reflect on global policy and development practices.
- 9 RCEs deliver a diversity of innovations for sustainability through co-engaged learning. The RCE community has a unique capability to communicate and upscale these innovations. Innovative actions positive impact the local community while the efforts of the global RCE Network brings these actions to the forefront of the international stage, allowing them to be replicated and increasing their impact.
- 10 The RCE network is actively involved in helping develop policies and practices related to ESD and sustainability innovations. RCEs are hubs of enhanced knowledge networks and, as such, they are able to take collective action that is often beyond the constraints of more bureaucratic organizations. Enhancing cross-boundary social learning and forging transnational policy research networks are key efforts of the global RCE movement. In this way, RCEs are at the forefront of dealing with complexities and uncertainties of sustainability issues.
- 11 RCE efforts encourage innovation and new approaches to sustainable development. They translate existing knowledge into concrete actions and empower individuals to make sustainable choices for themselves and their communities. By transdisciplinary research where higher education collaborates with society, RCEs also translate citizen and intangible knowledge into science for sustainable development. The success each RCE achieves on the local level is brought to scale through the global RCE Network of more than 100 RCEs worldwide. Local knowledge, expertise and best practices are shared globally through the network and are able to be adapted and applied successfully in other regions. RCEs also play a central role in the transfer of global technologies, knowledge and experiences at the local level, through their programmes, activities and international partners.

RCE Commitment to ESD:

- 12 RCEs declare their commitment to playing a leading role in the implementation of the DESD and spearheading the ESD movement beyond the end of the Decade in 2014. RCEs will work in a spirit of collaboration and mutual respect to achieve concrete actions and outcomes in line with the broader efforts of the international community. Through their efforts they will enable learners to fulfil their individual potential and will lead whole communities towards positive social transformation. RCEs will foster the fundamental pillars of learning to provide quality education and foster sustainable development worldwide.
- 13 RCEs stress the role of local and national governments in providing effective leadership and resources for promoting ESD within local communities. As our common challenge overrides political differences and transforming education requires an unyielding effort, the commitment of governments should be sustainable. RCEs will encourage local education institutions to lead changes in formal and informal education to meet global challenges, particularly through teacher training and curriculum transformation. RCEs also recognize the role of youth as custodians of the future. Youth should be given chance to be educated on current and future challenges, and allowed the opportunity to actively participate in the global RCE movement.

Way Forward:

- 14 To affirm their commitment to ESD, RCEs will implement the strategic and thematic actions outlined below, as well as other relevant actions that may arise over time, with a view to building a global learning space on sustainable development issues. RCEs will accelerate the exchange and sharing of resources, experiences and ‘good practices’ in ESD using the communication portal and other forums. Furthermore, RCEs will undertake necessary efforts to ensure that ESD is an integral part of the post-UNDESD agenda, including Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

Strategic Actions

RCEs and the Global Learning Space

- 15 RCEs are committed to actions aligned with the DESD vision, and in synergies with other international learning programmes, to contribute to building a global learning space on sustainable development issues, helping people in local communities and regions learn the values, behaviours and practices needed to create a sustainable future. At the local and regional levels, RCEs will serve as platforms for discussion and carrying out activities around learning for sustainable development. The activities of each RCE will quantifiably improve the ability of its local community to overcome sustainable development challenges they face. RCE’s local efforts will also support in overcoming regional development challenges. Globally, the RCE network will take these individual success case practices to scale, enabling diverse ideas and unique experiences to grow into more systematic approaches to sustainable development.

RCEs and Capacity Development

- 16 RCEs are committed to building their capacities to plan and implement collaborative ESD projects critical for the global learning space and to confirm the importance of multi-stakeholder learning in addressing

sustainability issues. RCEs therefore will develop programmes that maximise learning at individual, organizational, multi-stakeholder and regional levels. RCEs will also assess their existing capacities for facilitating and implementing ESD projects.

- 17 Capacity development will be viewed as a transformative learning process generated from within the RCE network. The process will involve more than fostering knowledge, competences and skills on sustainable development amongst RCE actors and stakeholders; it will be responsive to the broader social, economic and environmental context of the RCE network.
- 18 Within the global RCE community, RCEs will commit to using various approaches to develop capacities for ESD. Amongst them are to involve RCEs in the design and implementation of thematic capacity development programmes that will help address prevailing local sustainable development challenges. RCEs will design capacity development modules to address issues related to governance and management of RCEs, and will exchange experiences, ideas and best sustainability practices with other RCEs. An operational RCE communication portal will enhance widespread sharing of ESD resources.

RCEs and Research and Development

- 19 RCEs believe that ESD knowledge is locally relevant and meaningful to communities, and research that drives innovation emerges out of local problems in communities. RCEs will undertake multi-disciplinary and transdisciplinary research to make effective transformation for sustainable development.
- 20 RCEs will undertake research for capacity building in problem solving, bridging boundaries and interfacing, facilitating solutions and leadership, which are transdisciplinary and holistic in nature. RCEs will commit to enhancing research capacity through making use of existing collaborative partnerships to discuss methodologies and capacity building of researchers, raising awareness of transdisciplinarity among researchers, developing case studies of effective research approaches, and conducting appropriate research training.
- 21 RCEs are committed to mobilising resources and moving in strategic research directions by way of strategically linking universities in research processes and feedback of research results to communities.

Thematic Actions

RCEs and Climate Change

- 22 RCEs are committed to implementing climate-related actions at the regional/sub-national level, engaging multiple stakeholders in transformative learning and understanding of critical local climate change issues. Being part of the global network, the RCEs will exchange experiences and knowledge with other regions while contributing to the global knowledge base on climate-related issues.
- 23 In recognition of climate change challenges, RCEs will develop respective comprehensive programmes aiming at empowering the regions where RCEs operate to facilitate learning system that would address challenges of climate change. RCEs will become important partners for implementing global policies

addressing climate change, and facilitate learning necessary for acquiring critical competencies, and to contribute to the locally appropriate translation of the global mitigation and adaptation policies.

- 24 RCEs will chart future directions through community work with a clear understanding of the present often-disastrous impact of climate change on the lives of the communities. Generally, link of climate change and disaster prevention and management area is critical, and RCEs will demonstrate ways of doing so. Actions of RCE network will keep in mind an important concern on how to move from the small scale one-off projects to the programmes, and in the course of which RCEs could systematically support emergence of innovative experimental practices for low carbon society.

RCEs and Health

- 25 RCEs will address sustainability issues that relate to community health education, healthy environments including water and sanitation, alternative medicine, preventive health and sustainable lifestyles, and community-based health education. RCEs are committed to a shared vision - to reflect and engage on 'how people learn about health and what brings about social change' - and a shared strategy, which includes focusing on unique strengths of the RCEs in health education and facilitating collaboration with regional and international organizations dealing with health education and capacity development of various stakeholders.
- 26 RCEs will undertake community-based learning through root cause analysis, and transformative perspectives on health intervention and education will be used as tools. RCEs will create a platform to interact more effectively on community health education, advancing research through multi-stakeholder and multidisciplinary approaches.

RCEs and Higher Education

- 27 RCEs will lead and stimulate transformations, innovation, and incorporation of sustainable practices in HEI operation, education, research, governance, and outreach activities. RCEs will promote teaching for sustainable development through integration of sustainability in the curriculum of all disciplines, and training of teachers, professionals and practitioners.
- 28 RCEs will foster research on sustainable development that contributes to knowledge generation regarding sustainable solutions and new technologies, and will attempt to influence higher education policies, as well as to disseminate, transfer and promote knowledge applications to improve livelihood, foster sustainable lifestyles and community development, and decrease poverty levels. RCEs will engage with stakeholders in educational activities to develop capacity and skills for sustainable development, and will provide a space for dialogue with other stakeholders, networks and 'knowledge communities' that can open opportunities for knowledge generation.

RCEs, Traditional Knowledge and Biodiversity

- 29 RCEs are committed to contributing to the preservation of natural heritage by protecting species, ecosystems, and genetic diversity through mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation, sustainable use and management of natural resources, and advocacy in organisational plans and programmes. RCEs will

engage with multi-stakeholders with the aim of deepening involvement in biodiversity conservation through traditional and local knowledge education, engage in transformative education and training of trainers on biodiversity conservation for sustainable development that can change behavior of all stakeholders, and engage the mass media to create awareness on various issues relating to biodiversity conservation.

- 30 RCEs will encourage customary use of biological resources in line with principles of sustainable use and conservation, need to ensure equitable sharing of benefits among traditional knowledge (TK) holders while accessing biological resources and related knowledge. RCEs will call for reinforcing the community's confidence in relevant practices, while also addressing issues of resource rights, and integration of biodiversity and TK education at various forms and levels of education. They will utilise appropriate methodologies for bridging knowledge systems, promoting intergenerational transfer, assessing and promoting TK for contemporary needs such as health, nutrition, agriculture, livelihood, sustainable resource management and cultural diversity and continuity, as well as building institutional values and methods to provide choices in education.

RCEs, Youth and School

- 31 RCEs will establish and enhance youth and school capacities and resilience in adapting, solving, and tackling problems and challenges, and empowering the community by empowering the youth to solve problems and improve resilience. They are also committed to building the capacity and character of school students to enhance the knowledge, and engage them for local initiatives to protect the environment for sustainability. RCEs will undertake research and adapt appropriate technology in response to problems, challenges and opportunities faced by the community, and engage in training of trainers by and for the youth or young adult in the community on appropriate technology and skills. RCEs will commit to establish social networks for sharing knowledge and exchanging ideas, and developing collaborations with stakeholders (ministries, local governments, private sector, media, civil society, schools, universities, and others).

RCEs, Sustainable Consumption and Production and Sustainable Livelihoods

- 32 The RCE network will contribute to putting green economy issues into scientific social context in collaboration with knowledge institutions. The approach to green economy is to decouple economic growth with environmental impact, while tackling social considerations.
- 33 Changing consumption and production patterns as an overarching strategy for green economy requires behavioral societal transformation through education to effectuate a change in public consumption behavior, increase resource-use efficiency by the production and service sectors, and a change in the way governments administer and manage national resources. RCEs will therefore advocate public awareness on product and service selection, creating a mechanism to support green product and service marketing, promoting alternative markets and market forms, and integrating sustainable consumption concept into formal and informal education at all levels.

- 34 RCEs will promote effective use of resource-base in production and service sectors, which include applying the ecological footprint concept, promoting local innovations and entrepreneurship, development and application of clean and green technologies, promoting green design, green and clean production, seeking to promote a cradle to cradle product design, promoting green skills and addressing ethical traceability issues. RCEs will demonstrate good practice cases that can influence policies to develop a strategy to take care of and protect the resource-base.

Assessment

- 35 RCEs are committed to evaluation of their performance in terms of delivery of ESD goals and objectives. This requires undertaking evaluation of ESD activities as learning processes of social change. The evaluation can be in the form of self-assessment through the RCE Portal and peer reviews through an RCE evaluation and assessment working group. RCEs will strive to develop milestones for every collaborative project undertaken as a form of self-assessment. RCEs will also work to assess existing and necessary capability for ESD and SD actions.
- 36 RCEs will undertake necessary efforts to encourage the participation of actors in the development and assessment. This can be achieved through development of various assessment award schemes that take into account the regional and continental contexts of RCEs. These assessment schemes will highlight basic quality criteria including the impact of collaborative projects, partnerships amongst stakeholders, research, and sustainability innovations. It is important, however, that general assessment criteria are collectively set to minimise counterproductive outcomes of evaluation. The Global RCE Service Centre will promote and facilitate the regular use of the RCE communication portal for sharing outcomes of evaluation processes, and make an informative database on the same.