

# **Declaration of the International Conference on „Education & Governance for Sustainable Development”**

(Constantza, Romania, March 18<sup>th</sup> 2011)

## The context

The Conference was convened by the Black Sea Universities Network (BSUN) in partnership with the United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI) and was hosted by “Ovidius” University of Constantza. The event has been also included in the program of events of the Romanian Chairmanship in Office to Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization and as part of the mechanism of preparation for the 2012 “Rio+20” Conference.

Participants were from the BSUN member universities, partner organizations, business community and governmental agencies from Albania, Azerbaijan, Austria, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine, BSEC Business Council and the United Nations. A list of participants is attached.

## Deliberations

The Conference applauded the UNAI as a timely and imaginative initiative to allow the exercise of intellectual social responsibility for the greater global good.

The Conference recognized the importance of building the knowledge base for Green Economy in the context of Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development, and highlighted the critical role played by universities in this regard.

The Conference underlined that the academic world as well as governments, media and the public at large need to get a deeper understanding of, and appreciation for, the specific contribution of research and education to the goals of attaining Sustainable Development.

The Conference also recognized the importance of acknowledging that funding of such activities is a shared responsibility that involves governments, the private sector and the philanthropic community, the last especially for such activities that are of a transnational and of a public interest nature.

The Conference highlighted that much of the intellectual capital developed by universities should be considered as Global Commons which must be nurtured, cultivated and preserved through a universal, trans-generational perspective.

## Decisions:

At the outset of the Conference, the participants observed a minute of silence in compassion with the victims of the earthquakes and tsunami in Japan and conveyed their sympathy and solidarity with

the people and Government of that country who have done so much to bring education and governance in the area of sustainable development and disaster management.

The Conference lauded the work already begun by the UNAI Sustainability hub, including its comprehensive website. It urged all institutions participating in the conference to indicate a project or activity related to sustainability which they intend or wish to carry out in 2011 in the context of UNAI and to communicate this to the BSUN Secretariat by April 15<sup>th</sup> 2011.

The Conference affirmed that the academic community, including in particular through the UN Academic Impact initiative, should pursue and promote the Sustainable Development agenda, with a focus on the following elements:

1. Efforts should focus on building the research capacity for Sustainable Development, taking into account in particular specific local needs
2. Recognition of the diversity of education systems serving the universality of learning is essential and includes but is not limited to:
  - development of regional programmes
  - joint degree programmes
  - transfer of knowledge
  - certification
  - cooperative/networking education programmes and skills
3. Green economy must be actively promoted in the Black Sea Region, taking into account the specific conditions of the area. In particular, it should be treated as scale dependent, equitable, ethical and allow sustainable profits in a sustainable society. The Conference noted the many creative ventures, particularly in the area of green transportation and clean energy which are being undertaken by various universities and research institutions in the region.
4. The Conference urged Universities to identify new governance models allowing the participation of different stakeholders in the decision making process.
5. The Conference took note of the need for mobilization of Universities to develop proper models for financing Sustainable Development projects which should be creatively considered by traditional as well as non-traditional donors and partners.
6. The Conference appreciated the call by UN Under-Secretary-General Akasaka to develop a set of indicators by which progress on sustainable development could be measured. Conference participants resolved to work to define a core set of standards against which sustainable development could be assessed in a reliable and consistent manner with compatible data and models.
7. The Conference recognized the important role of logistics in attaining Sustainability and recommended to Universities to develop partnerships with the business community and related stakeholders to support innovations in the sector.

8. The Conference appreciated the importance of inter-operability of systems as playing an essential role in preserving the diversity of our world.

9. The Conference urged institutions and individuals to promote awareness of social responsibility at the individual and collective levels in its various dimensions, including intellectual and corporate.

10. The Conference resolved to harness the power of universal communication to ensure the global participation in the sustainability movement and noted the critical role of the UNAI hub on sustainability in this regard. It is essential to mobilize formal and informal ways of capacity-building and to provide the media with systemic, accurate, consistent, and compelling information and cases about sustainable development. Efforts should be reinforced to devise proper synergies and long-term partnerships.

The Conference noted it had been organized with the aim of bringing together the rectors, businessmen, government and academic representatives in order to promote the alignment of the institutions of higher education and business community with the UNAI principle on sustainability. The Conference believed it had served as a platform for cooperation between universities and management-related academic institutions and the business community on education and governance for sustainable development, and had made a contribution to United Nations processes including the Rio+20 Summit preparations and UNAI.

The Conference expressed its deep appreciation to BSUN and the organizing committee, led by Dr. Eden Mamut for the tireless efforts they had put in to ensure the success of the event, substantively and logistically. It expressed its gratitude to "Ovidius" University of Constantza and its Rector, Dr. Victor Ciupina for their extraordinary hospitality, particularly at the busy and momentous time of the institution's fiftieth anniversary.