

Foreword



UNEP's environmental education, awareness and training programmes are central to the organisation's mandate of "inspiring, informing and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations." According to Agenda 21: "Education is critical for achieving environmental and ethical awareness, values and attitudes, skills and behaviour consistent with sustainable development and for effective public participation in decision-making." Sustainable development can only be achieved where people are well-informed of the challenges and have the relevant knowledge, skills and motivation to address them.

In the context of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, which urges societies around the world to begin re-orienting their educational systems towards sustainability, African Ministers of Education have committed themselves to implementing the goals of education for sustainable development in national strategies and action plans. The aim of the UNEP Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Innovations Course and Toolkit is to provide support to university teachers and managers in Africa who are planning and implementing programmes that will bring environment and sustainability into the mainstream of learning and research.

Education for Sustainable Development introduces a focus on values and ethics, and on new challenges for multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary dialogue, teaching and research. It also encourages universities to enhance their role in shaping society's future, and in seeking solutions to Africa's environmental and developmental challenges. The UNEP ESD Innovations Course and Toolkit provide a platform for discussing and examining sustainable development innovations in different African universities. The course gives a broad orientation to the concept of sustainable development, and introduces university teachers and managers to the range of possibilities for



action that exist in teaching, research, community engagement and management.

The toolkit also aims to strengthen and complement the broader dimensions of the Mainstreaming Environment and Sustainability in Africa (MESA) Universities Partnership, which engages a wide range of university teachers, researchers, students and managers. All university disciplines have a role to play in addressing sustainable development challenges in Africa. It is our hope that participants in the ESD Innovations course will be able to engage successfully with other aspects of the MESA Universities Partnership.

In preparing this ESD Innovations Course and Toolkit, three consultative working meetings (two in Nairobi, Kenya, one in Howick, South Africa) were held. Participants included lecturers, professors and managers from 30 African universities, and a broad range of partners who are working with UNEP to support the mainstreaming of environment and sustainability into higher education. We would particularly like to acknowledge the contribution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the African Association of Universities (AAU), the Global Virtual University (GVU), the United Nations University (UNU) and the Global Higher Education for Sustainable Development Partnerships project, together with sub-regional structures such as the Southern African Development Community Regional Environmental Education Programme (SADC-REEP) and the Nile Basin Transboundary Environmental Project. This partnership promises to enhance the quality and relevance of higher education in Africa in the context of sustainable development.

We wish all participating universities every success in implementing this initiative, and look forward to seeing the results, which we believe will contribute significantly to environmental sustainability and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in Africa.



Shafqat Kakakhel
Deputy Executive Director and Officer-in-Charge of UNEP

