

UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development

13-15 January 2027



Sustainability challenges

The world's population set to rise from 7.7 billion to 9.7 billion by 2050, with natural resources and biodiversity under threat due to human activities including unsustainable consumption and production. These global challenges are exacerbated by deepening social inequalities and increasing conflicts. We must urgently translate awareness into concrete action.

Education has a key transformative role in empowering learners with knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to take informed decisions and make responsible actions for the wellbeing of people and the planet. It is essential that we learn to live together sustainably and peacefully; transforming education systems is critical to building a just, inclusive and sustainable world for present and future generations.

Role of Education for Sustainable Development

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) was born from the need for education to address growing sustainability challenges. Education can teach us the desire to live harmoniously within our natural environment as a part of a shared ecosystem with other living beings. ESD reorients education systems to empower learners of all ages, abilities and backgrounds. It supports the development of competences – including knowledge, skills, values and attitudes – needed to act for environmental integrity, economic viability and social justice.

ESD also promotes action-oriented and transformative pedagogies that build understanding and capacities for action, and fosters the willingness to live sustainably. It contributes to transforming societies and systems towards sustainability and inclusion, while recognizing the diversity of knowledge systems, including indigenous and local knowledge.

UNESCO has been the lead United Nations agency on ESD since the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) and the subsequent Global Action Programme (2015-2019), which helped maintain ESD on the policy agenda and strengthen the role of education in promoting sustainable development. Building on lessons learned of these global efforts led by policy-makers, educators, learners and practitioners, a new framework was adopted by UNESCO's General Conference to guide the implementation of "ESD for 2030" (2020-2030). The official launch of the ESD for 2030 framework took place in a virtual [UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development](#) on 17-19 May 2021 in Berlin, Germany. The ESD for 2030 [framework](#) and its implementation [roadmap](#) incorporated a renewed emphasis on Member States' leadership and a recognition of ESD's critical role in advancing the Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education (SDG 4), in particular Target 4.7, and enabling all other SDGs.

In 2021, informed by a 2-year global consultation process engaging around one million people, UNESCO launched a report on [Reimagining our futures together](#). The report calls for a new social contract to mobilise education as a force to build peaceful, just and sustainable futures together and for all. This report, alongside the ESD for 2030 framework and its roadmap, were promoted through the UN Transforming Education Summit in September 2022. The Summit confirmed that **education must be transformed to respond to the global climate and environmental crisis**. Building off the knowledge and practice accumulated in ESD, a [Greening Education Partnership](#) was launched to deliver evidence-based, coordinated and comprehensive action to accelerate and improve the implementation of climate change education.

In November 2023, UNESCO Member States adopted by consensus the **Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights, and Sustainable Development**. This global standard positions education as a catalyst for resilience, justice and sustainable and positive peace, ensuring learners are equipped to address today's challenges and shape inclusive futures. The Recommendation highlights how different education approaches, such as ESD, Global

Citizenship Education (GCED), human rights education, and education for health and well-being, play a complementary role in the overall aims of the Recommendation.

The United Nations General Assembly adopted in December 2025 the resolution "[Education for sustainable development in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)" (A/RES/80/141). It emphasizes the importance of equipping learners with the knowledge and skills to advance sustainable development including through ESD, sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls, the promotion of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and an appreciation of cultural diversity and its contribution to sustainable development.

In order to protect the gains of these global frameworks and actions for ESD, maintain momentum and build on lessons learned over the past two decades, now is a critical moment for stakeholders to convene and strengthen the role of ESD until 2030 and beyond.

Goal of the 2026 ESD World Conference

In response to urgent global challenges and marking the final stretch of the ESD for 2030 framework, the ESD World Conference aims to generate renewed momentum and provide guidance toward 2030 objectives and beyond. It seeks to foster a more just and sustainable world by promoting inclusive, transformative, and evidence-based education systems that empower learners of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds to become responsible, active contributors to sustainable societies and a healthy planet.

It will also highlight ongoing challenges and emerging trends including climate change, the integration of green skills, rapid technological advancements, diverse knowledge systems and the growing importance of social-emotional and behavioural learning domains in creating a holistic approach to sustainability. The Conference will also explore the future role of ESD in the lead up to 2030 and beyond.

Held for the first time in Africa, the **ESD World Conference** will engage Ministers of Education and other high-level delegates through ministerial roundtables. Stakeholders from the broader ESD community of practice (United Nations, civil society organizations, academia, private sector, etc.) will also be invited to participate in plenary and parallel sessions. Youth will be at the centre of this Conference, ensuring their active engagement in shaping the Conference outcomes.

Conference objectives

- **Celebrate 6 years of ESD for 2030:** Reflect on the progress of ESD implementation, celebrate its achievements to date, maintain its visibility and priority on the broader education agenda, and identify obstacles encountered and lessons learned to guide future action.
- **Unpack emerging global issues and ESD:** Position greening education as a key strategy for enhancing climate action as a key sustainability challenge, and facilitate dialogue on the role of digital technologies in ESD and the impact of ESD on the digital transition.

- **Highlight the centrality of youth and educators in accelerating ESD action:** Strengthen the role of youth as drivers of ESD, and highlight the importance of empowering teachers, school leaders and education support personnel as change agents.
- **Foster global networking and partnerships for ESD:** Facilitate new connections and strengthen existing networks among educators, policymakers, researchers, Indigenous Peoples and other stakeholders to enhance collaboration and knowledge-sharing, driving collective action for sustainable development.
- **Envision ESD beyond 2030 with renewed commitment:** Explore how ESD can shape the post-2030 agenda and address future global challenges to inform the multi-stakeholder consultation process led by youth and the SDG 4 High-Level Steering Committee. Secure stronger commitments from Member States and partners to scale up ESD through policy, financing and collaboration.

Expected outcomes

1. **Global ESD Stocktake (2021-2026)**, highlighting key data, evidence base, success stories, and best practices.
2. **Nairobi Consensus**, outlining the continued collective commitment of stakeholders to ESD ambitions and providing insights into trends and projections beyond the 2030 horizon.
3. UNESCO's **outcome document from Munich Symposium on the role of ESD in the beyond-2030** global education and sustainable development agenda.
4. **Strengthened and Expanded Stakeholder Networks**, engaging a wide range of stakeholders.
5. **Empowerment of youth leaders and change agents** to meaningfully engage in, and influence, global ESD processes including showcasing youth led initiatives and impact at local, national and global levels.
6. **Renewed commitments** from governments, partners and international community to scale up ESD.

Process: Milestones & timeline

An **Advisory Group** has been established and co-chaired by UNESCO and the Government of Kenya. The group is comprised of Member States and ESD experts, meeting (virtually) on a quarterly basis to inform the Conference programme, outcome document and other technical content. The Advisory Group will facilitate regional consultations (virtually) with government representatives and other ESD experts in the lead-up to the Conference to collect inputs into the outcome document. The draft outcome document will also be circulated with Conference invitees alongside a questionnaire to collect feedback and/or endorsement prior to the Conference, where it will be launched.

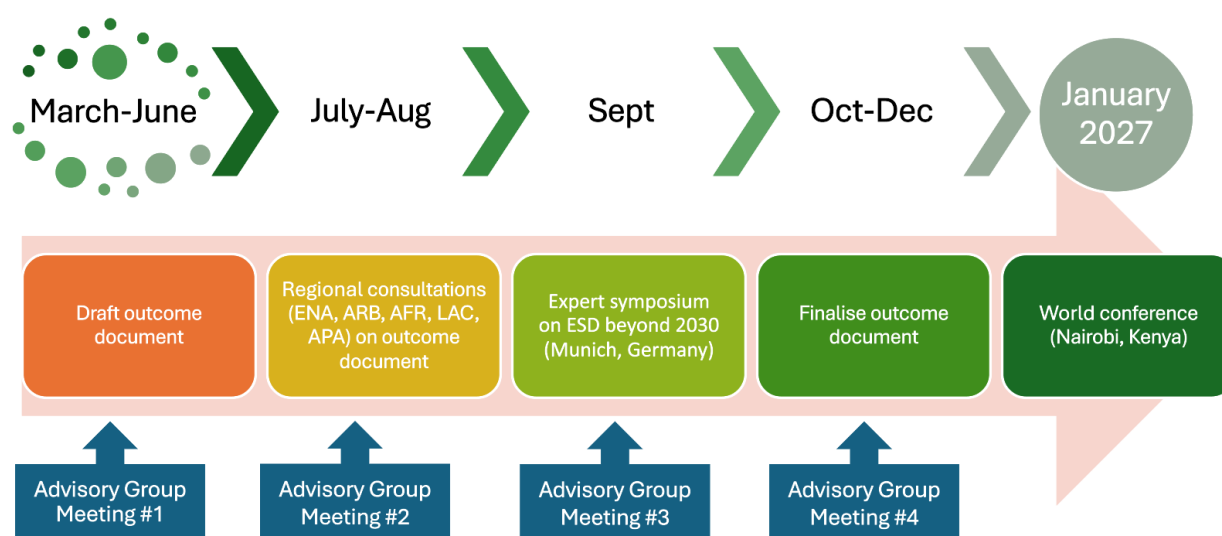
Additionally, a joint **Planning Committee** has been established and co-chaired by UNESCO and the Government of Kenya to lead the operational planning of the Conference, including logistics and administrative matters.

Thematic papers will be commissioned by UNESCO on an ESD global stocktake and on ESD beyond the 2030 agenda. To finalise the drafting of the latter, an in-person symposium will be held in Germany with a group of ESD experts to provide inputs into the document, which will then be launched at the Conference.

Key milestones in the lead-up to the Conference include:

- Quarterly Advisory Group meetings
- Regional consultations to inform the development of the outcome document
- Circulation of the draft outcome document and questionnaire to Conference invitees for inputs and endorsement
- Expert symposium on ESD Beyond 2030 (in Germany)

These milestones are illustrated in the timeline below:



Date and venue

The Conference will take place during 3 days on 13 to 15 January 2027 in Nairobi, Kenya (venue TBC).

A pre-conference side event is foreseen on 12 January 2027 for an orientation and preparatory meeting for young people, led and managed by UNESCO's Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Education and Peace (MGIEP).

Participants

Approximately 300 to 500 stakeholders from all regions of the world will participate in-person.

All UNESCO Member States will be invited to nominate a delegation comprising the Minister of Education or another relevant line ministry such as Ministry of the Environment, and key high-level government representatives from other sustainable development sectors. UNESCO will also invite members of ESD-Net and the Greening Education Partnership (GEP), as well as ESD experts and practitioners from NGOs, academia and the private sector. Additionally, youth and educators and representatives of Indigenous Peoples will be strongly prioritized as key participants in the Conference.

Working languages

English and French will be the working languages of the conference. Simultaneous interpretation will be provided for plenary sessions, with limited interpretation in parallel sessions (TBC).

Format

The Conference will be **in-person** through a series of plenary and parallel sessions, with the option of livestream of plenary sessions to enable broader participation (TBC).

It is also envisioned that participants can opt to join site visits to see ESD in action within Kenyan educational contexts.

Preliminary agenda

	Pre-Conference youth orientation	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Morning	Onboarding and preparation for Conference participation	- Opening ceremony - Plenary	Site visits	Parallel sessions
Afternoon	Youth capacity building on ESD	- Plenary - Parallel sessions - Welcome reception	- Featured speaker - Plenary	- Parallel sessions - Plenary - Closing ceremony

Annexes:

Annex 1: Past ESD global events

World conferences

- **2014:** The **ESD World Conference in Nagoya (2014)**, organized by UNESCO and the Japanese government, focused on the theme "*Shaping the Global Action Plan for ESD.*" The main outcomes of this conference included the adoption of the **Nagoya Declaration**, which reaffirmed the importance of ESD in achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The declaration called for ESD to be integrated into education systems and sustainable development policies, and it laid the foundation for the **Global Action Programme on ESD**, a framework for strengthening and scaling up ESD initiatives worldwide. The event gathered 76 Ministers and Vice minister of Education and was officially opened by His Imperial Highness Crown Prince Naruhito of Japan.
- **2021:** The **ESD World Conference in Berlin (2021)**, hosted by the German government, was centred around the theme "Learning Today for a Sustainable Future." The conference's key outcome was the adoption of the **Berlin Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development**, which highlighted the importance and commitment to promote ESD in fostering sustainability across all sectors of society. It was the occasion to launch the **ESD for 2030 Framework** and kick off the implementation of the ESD for 2030 Roadmap which focuses on action through five priority action areas: policy support, whole-school approaches, educators, youth, and local communities. Around 80 Ministers and Vice Ministers of Education made commitments on their countries' plan of action on ESD for 2030 implementation.

Global meetings

- **2017:** The first **Review Forum of the Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD** was held in Ottawa, Canada, during the UNESCO Week for Education for Peace and Sustainable Development, with the central theme of teachers and practitioners. This forum reviewed progress of GAP implementation since 2014, discussed innovations and emerging issues in ESD and developed plans for the GAP. The focus of the Forum was on assessing pedagogical approaches to facilitate change in teaching practices, as well as highlighting innovative approaches.
- **2018:** A meeting was convened among partners of the GAP on ESD of on the topic of **Looking at the Future of Education for Sustainable Development, together** in San Jose, Costa Rica. Representatives of the key partners met at the 3rd Key Partners Meeting. With the framework of the GAP on ESD elapsing in 2019, this meeting launched a round of global consultation to chart a course of action in support of ESD beyond 2019.

- **2018: A Technical Consultation Meeting on the ESD for 2030 Framework** was held in Bangkok, Thailand. This session convened over 270 government representatives and experts from 116 Member States to provide further inputs into the development of the Framework and to discuss the future direction of travel for governments and UNESCO in promoting ESD. A key theme was the critical role of community in mobilising ESD action, while the discussions overall demonstrated the commitment of Member States to implementing ESD as a tool to achieve the SDGs. The consultation resulted in finalization of the Framework for the Implementation of ESD Beyond 2019, upon which the new ESD programme was developed.
- **2019:** the Forum on Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship was held in Hanoi, Viet Nam. UNESCO brought together stakeholder groups and experts from both areas to support synergies between ESD and GCED, and foster a holistic approach to Target 4.7 of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Education and the Education 2030 Agenda. The forum addressed how the cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural dimensions of ESD and GCED are reflected in pre-primary, primary and secondary education, and exchange innovative and promising approaches on how to address gaps and fully harness the potential of the three domains of learning at the three levels of education to support sustainable development and global citizenship.
- **2023:** The **ESD-Net Global Meeting in Tokyo** was co-organized by UNESCO and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), Japan and hosted by the United Nations University (UNU). This meeting focused on sharing the implementation and progress of the ESD-2030 country initiatives, trends, challenges and innovations within the framework of Agenda 2030, and discussing the action points for the next two years 2024-2025. Representatives from more than 80 countries participated, including Member States and partner organizations, with 215 in-person attendees, demonstrating strong commitment to transforming education through ESD for 2030.

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