

**Speech of Ms. Tamar Aladashvili, Deputy Head of Environmental Policy and  
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Your Excellences,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am extremely happy and honored having the opportunity to be here in the beautiful City of Vancouver and participate in the 9th World Environmental Education Congress. Let me join the previous speakers and extend my gratitude to the organizers of this event for inviting to this important International Conference on Environmental Education.

I am delighted and proud for participating in the conference and particularly the session that is dedicated to the 40th anniversary of “Tbilisi Conference on Education for Sustainable Development” that was held in 1977 in Georgia. *Tbilisi Declaration*, adopted at that Conference was the first international declaration that marked the milestones of ESD and provided fundamental principles for sustainable development agenda. It defines main goals of environmental education and establishes a framework for formal, non-formal and informal environmental education both at national, and international levels. Another important document reflecting the core principles of environmental education is the outcome document of Tbilisi+35 - *Tbilisi Communiqué* which provides a platform for authorities from environmental, educational and other relevant sectors with the aim to enhance international cooperation for ensuring sustainable future.

After 40 years of the Tbilisi Conference and continuous efforts of the international community to foster effective implementation of Education for Sustainable Development, we are still facing a persisting challenges in this direction. These challenges are common in most countries. A systematic approach is needed to address them, including raising the environmental awareness of the society in order to increase their responsibility through integrating environmental issues into education curricula at all levels and learning environment tailored to sustainable development principles. We need to find sustainable solutions, to take steps to find the roots of the challenges and start addressing them more effectively.

Georgia has long history of promoting environmental education. The Ministry, as a responsible body for environmental education, leads the process of environmental awareness raising through non-formal and informal education. Therefore, I would like to draw your attention to the practical actions undertaken by my country, Georgia in order to pave the way towards education for sustainable development.

One of the most significant achievements in this direction was adoption of “*Georgian National ESD Strategy and Action Plan*” (2012 – 2014). Now we are currently working on the elaboration of new *ESD Strategy and Action Plan for 2018-2022*. The development and implementation of this new strategy will ensure introduction of sustainable development principles in education system of the country. It covers pre-school, general (primary, basic and secondary level), vocational and higher education. The main goal is to equip teachers and students with appropriate knowledge and skills on sustainable development, increase motivation and activity in population and thus promote creation of responsible society.

Another important step forward supporting environmental education in Georgia is the establishment of the *LEPL Environmental Information and Education Center* under the Ministry in 2013 that ensures public access to timely, reliable and accurate information, as well as facilitate the involvement of the population in decision-making process. Several campaigns have been launched and different activities have been carried out in close collaboration with relevant stakeholders for raising awareness on environmental issues.

In order to promote environmental education a pre-school and higher education programs have been initiated by the Ministry in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science with the aim to introduce environmental component in the curriculum of the academic programmes. In support to achieving these goals the *Eco-club Initiative* has been launched in Georgia covering comprehensive training and educational activities for teachers, students and their families. At preschool level a special book has been elaborated and the relevant institutions have been retrained in order to promote the implementation of environmental activities at earliest academic level. Furthermore, “*Eco hub*” - a green co-working space has been established where students are able to work in groups, plan environmental projects, organize open lectures and information meetings. Moreover, *Eco-Leaders’ School* has been set up in order to support youth initiatives on environmental issues and improve their practical skills.

In addition to these significant developments, it should be underlined that since September 2016, Georgia enjoys the *Master’s Degree Program in Environmental Management and Policy* which is a joint initiative of the Ministry, the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs and LEPL Environmental Information and Education Center. The students of the programme represent different social groups such as governmental bodies, civil society, NGOs, grassroots, private sector and international organizations. This Programme demonstrates the efforts of the GoG to increase the capacities of the country in the field of environmental management, protection and policy, thus contribute to the sustainable development of Georgia.

With regard to informal environmental education I would like to refer to number of green campaigns carried out by the Ministry such as trainings for public awareness raising, eco-educational tours, eco-camps and visits to the protected areas. Moreover, different clean-up,

planting, bird-watching and red list campaigns are being conducted in order to promote better understanding of the effects of human activities on the environment.

We all know that ESD is more than a knowledge related to environment, economy, and society. It addresses learning skills, perspectives, values, local and global issues. They should be addressed in a formal education to reorient education system and address sustainability through integrating all sustainability issues. Selecting what contributes to sustainability and adjusting to national circumstances is a need for reorientation.

Values are also an integral part of ESD and in some cultures, values taught in schools are very strong tools for development. This is related to the topic of today's conference - culture and environment. Understanding values and culture is a central part of education for a sustainable future.

To conclude, in spite of all these remarkable developments, continuous efforts are needed in order to further foster the effective implementation of Education for Sustainable Development. I believe that with close collaboration and active engagement of international community and all stakeholders, we will be able to achieve our environmental and educational goals at all levels.

Thank you and wish you success and fruitful discussions at the Conference.