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Linking All Stakeholders on Sustainable Development at Regional/Local Levels

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Mr. Chairman,

As a think-tank within the United Nations, United Nations University (UNU) has been contributing to CSD's discussions on energy for sustainable development (SD), industrial development, air pollution/atmosphere and climate change.

For instance, the UNU Geothermal Research, Exploration and Development (UNU/GTP), which is located in Reykjavik, Iceland, offers training in geothermal research, exploration and development and published various publications. The UNU has also carried out various studies on energy, industrial development, air pollution/ atmosphere and climate change and convened many workshops/seminars/training courses, especially on climate change. Some of them are disseminated at CSD14. Research undertaken by the UNU indicates that education and capacity building is a key component for the successful implementation of climate change policies.

The UNU has also contributed to the CSD14 by convening a learning centre activity on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) as well as a side event on Regional Centres of Expertise on education for sustainable development (RCEs).

Mr. Chairman,

Since the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, the UNU has been making significant efforts to strengthen collaboration between scientists and educators, together with other foremost scientific and educational institutions who signed the Ubuntu Declaration. The UNU has also been emphasizing the important role of educators, and encouraging them to be more active in promoting sustainable development at all levels of education and in all sectors.

We are happy to note that the role of educators in the CSD process has been strengthened based on the decisions at CSD11. We firmly believe that education, in close collaboration with science and technology, is a key agent for change, especially at the regional and local levels. It is our sincere hope that the growing recognition that education and capacity building must be one of the foundations for all future efforts will motivate the CSD to further strengthen the role of educators in the CSD process, and the role of education as the means of implementing Agenda 21 and the commitments made in Johannesburg.

Mr. Chairman,

As you are aware, the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UN/DESD) started in January 2005. To promote its implementation, the UNU has put particular emphasis on regional and local approaches. The UNU has proposed creating Regional Centers of Expertise on education for sustainable development (RCEs). These innovative mechanisms aim to strengthen communication and collaboration among different stakeholders at regional/local levels. RCEs will strengthen collaboration between different levels of formal education, between formal and non-formal education, and between science and education. Participants in RCEs include school teachers, university professors, experts in research institutions and museums, local government officials, local NGOs, media and local industries.

Comment [PJM1]: No members of NGOs? Other civil society or community groups?

Members of our twelve strong RCE network are promoting policies and public campaigns for environmentally sound, socially acceptable and economically sustainable energy use through energy efficiency improvements, renewable energy strategies etc. Many RCEs are addressing climate change challenges, especially impacts of climate change on local communities and selective centers are also addressing unacceptable air pollution levels especially from traffic sources. We believe that such tangible actions at regional/local levels are the key for success on these important challenges particularly when they include changing values and life styles of ordinary people. RCEs play an important role in these efforts through improved education, public awareness and training.

We have just initiated these efforts. I hope by next year we can provide further examples of good practices and some policy recommendations, based on the operational experiences of RCEs, for consideration by delegates at CSD15. The UNU commits to promoting RCEs throughout the UN/DESD and expects to add more than ten new RCEs located by the end of this year. We believe that RCEs and their networks could demonstrate how education can serve as means of implementation to achieving sustainable development.