



2009 G8 University Summit
Torino Declaration on Education and Research
for Sustainable and Responsible Development
(Turin Declaration)

The Presidents, Rectors, Chancellors, Vice-Chancellors and representatives of leading educational and research institutions in the G8 member nations (hereinafter referred to as “Presidents”), gathered in Torino, Piemonte, Italy, from 17th to 19th, of May 2009, to attend the “2009 G8 University Summit” (hereinafter referred to as the “2009 University Summit”), prior to the “L’Aquila 2009 G8 Summit” meeting of the Heads of State. Capitalizing on the outcomes of the 2008 G8 University Summit (hereinafter referred to as the “2008 University Summit”) held in Sapporo, Japan, the purpose of the 2009 University Summit was to acknowledge the pivotal role that higher education institutions and scientific research organizations should play in supporting sustainable and responsible development, both at global and local levels. The United Nations University as well as the leading universities from the Outreach 5 nations, other important nations and worldwide networks of international universities were also invited to participate to broaden the international contribution in tackling the issues facing humanity relating to sustainable and responsible development.

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs [...]. In essence sustainable development is a process of change in which exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological developments and institutional change are all in harmony and enhance current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations

(WCED, Brundtland Commission, 1987)

Foreword

The 2008 University Summit focused on the importance of structuring and networking in promoting global sustainability. Carrying forward the outcomes from Sapporo to Torino, the Presidents attending the 2009 University Summit acknowledge the important role that education and research play in informing, promoting and implementing sustainable and responsible development. Sustainability science is emerging and evolving, and has come to play an increasingly important role in addressing one of the greatest challenges facing humankind. Sustainability cannot be achieved by merely engaging natural sciences but must also engage life sciences, social sciences and humanities. The interdependence and interaction among economics, ethics, energy policy and ecology (4 E's) is one critical example, which needs to be explored.

The Presidents agree to address the following key elements of educational and research strategies for adoption in their own universities and the promotion of such strategies in other universities. They agree to the following approach, which relates to content (“principles”) and implementation (“engagement”) of educational and research strategies.

Section I

Principles

The Presidents attending the 2009 University Summit agree that universities should foster sustainable and responsible development at a local as much as on a global level through new approaches within the educational and research systems, and implement the following:

1. New models of social and **economic** development consistent with sustainability principles

The current severe economic downturn has increased the pressures on the already threatened global sustainability. On the other hand, we should also recognize that a successful implementation of sustainable and responsible development could serve as a driving force for developing a new economy. Universities should provide rational approaches to understand how to use natural resources most efficiently, how to make such knowledge accessible to everybody and how to propose reasoned guidance for public policy and decision making, from the perspective of long-term sustainability.

2. Ethical approaches to sustainable development

In their education, research and outreach programs, universities should commit to creating new approaches to sustainable development that fully engage ethical considerations including trust, distributional fairness, cultural diversity and intergenerational perspectives. Externally, universities should encourage engagement of the broader community to promote ethical, balanced, responsible and fair global policies for sustainability.

3. New approaches to **energy** policy

Universities should provide expertise and impetus toward the rational use of natural resources and the pro-active development of a transition to alternative energies and energy-saving technologies.

4. Focus on sustainable *ecosystems*

Universities should encourage an additional focus on generating and disseminating knowledge, practice and lifestyles relating to sustainable ecosystems, emphasizing the interdependence between the environment and human activities. Universities should also encourage developing systems which are resilient and can survive major disturbances whether natural or man-made. The objective is to aid society and policy makers to understand the impact of their activities and to enable informed decision making.

Section II

Engagements

The Presidents attending the 2009 University Summit agree that strategies need to be developed and employed to implement the agenda proposed in Section I with emphasis on 4 E's, including the following:

1. Broad, global engagement to promote awareness of sustainability issues

Sustainable development impacts on everyone and all need to take ownership of and get involved with the concept. Universities should promote an inclusive partnership and knowledge sharing between developing and developed parts of the world. They should be providing leadership, advocacy and guidance to policy makers, industry, the community and individuals, which will foster the awareness and understanding of the interdependence among the different regions of the globe as much as among the 4 E's in promoting sustainable development. In this regard, universities should be role models for society.

Universities also need to ensure that they are educating the next generation of leaders in fields relevant to sustainable development. All students should be exposed to the issues connected with sustainable development, and encouraged to be involved in the creation of a sustainable and responsible society in the spirit of global citizenship.

2. Restructuring of education and research to incorporate and integrate cutting-edge knowledge

The development of a sustainable society requires the latest knowledge in all 4 E's, restructured to reverse past tendencies toward mono-disciplinary approaches and fragmentation in education and research, and to foster an integrated holistic approach to decision making and problem-solving. Disciplinary thinking has to be supplemented by systems thinking.

3. Governance for strategic development

Universities and research institutes should provide policy makers with access to high quality education and research results to ensure that they are developing policies based on the latest knowledge. Equally important, universities should play a pivotal role in advocating the development of sound governance, based on new participative, multi-scale, polycentric approaches to policy making and public administration, regulation and law. For these purposes efforts must be made toward the establishment of a new ethical foundation of sustainability. In addition, proper communication channels between universities and policy makers should be established so that governments can respond effectively to the results of research and new knowledge related to sustainable development.

4. Networking of networks

Essential to the development of sustainability science is the implementation of the "Network of networks" (NNs), launched at the "2008 G8 University Summit," which aims to link various discipline-specific research networks already in place. Built upon the NNs, an Education and Research Virtual Centre on sustainable and responsible development should be established to act as an integrated yet autonomous virtual research centre in the pursuit of sustainable and responsible development.

Section III

Recommendations/Proposals to the G8 Leaders

Based on the points we have jointly affirmed above, we, the Presidents of the universities attending the G8 University Summit, hereby suggest that we and our fellow presidents, chancellors, vice-chancellors and rectors around the world take the following actions for universities as living laboratories as part of our response and engagement to support sustainable development:

- a) Educate students at all levels in the issues concerning sustainable development so that they may pursue the creation of sustainable and responsible societies.
- b) Establish and give priority to research programs focused on sustainable development; create an Education and Research Virtual Centre on sustainable and responsible development, based on an active implementation of the NNs with two main objectives: the hardware (support sustainable university campuses) and the software (add value to the development of human capital).
- c) Engage students in policy making by adopting the Palermo Declaration from the 2009 G8 University Students' Summit and, in addition to the 2010 Students' Summit, by including the students and their perspectives in the 2010 G8 University Summit.
- d) Develop partnerships with the private and the non-profit sectors to transfer knowledge and commercialize new technologies that advance sustainable development.

We also encourage our governments to take the following actions:

- e) Support, inform, encourage and share good governance and policy making

based on sustainable and responsible development principles.

- f) Find opportunities for developing countries to be partners in education and research for sustainable development and for those countries to be included in the decision making processes and policies of all countries.
- g) Promote responsible development as a driving force to create a sustainable economy.
- h) Look to universities for scientifically based approaches, and potential actions, in creating public policy on sustainability.

Finally, we encourage the following joint actions:

- i) Recognize the role played by education and research in the many fields relevant to sustainable development and foster among students, teachers, scholars and leaders awareness of the responsibility and ethical behavior required to achieve this task.
- j) Encourage holistic thinking and an integrated approach to decision making and problem-solving.
- k) Increase the amount and urgency of research into sustainable development and enhance the level of financial support for this activity.

We, the presidents of the universities attending the 2009 University Summit, do hereby reiterate that universities should play a key role to pursue sustainable and responsible development, confirming the commitments contained herein, and address the proposals for action to the G8 leaders and the international community.