

## ***SOUTH AFRICAN STATEMENT (01 JULY 2015)***

### ***“Reaching out to the world”: Training and learning for sustainable development***

#### ***Are institutions in charge of training and education and education ready and equipped to gear their programmes towards supporting the SDGs?***

Education at all levels can serve as a powerful tool in promoting sustainable development, hence the framing of the concept “education for sustainable development”. It is during early childhood learning that sustainable development values should be infused in curricula design and concerted efforts must be made to devote special focus and emphasis in the research streams on sustainable development, to be further developed in universities and other higher learning platforms. As called for in the Rio+20 outcome, higher education should do more to seek, establish and disseminate a clearer understanding of sustainable development. This should be demonstrated by stepping up efforts to support sustainable development through the introduction of new programmes and courses related to education for sustainable development and extending the value and impact of their teaching to their respective communities.

Institutions of higher learning should also deepen their engagement with governments, especially legislators and policymakers, and vice versa, to further define and popularize sustainable development, particularly in issues where one of the dimensions of sustainable development are at risk of being neglected. This engagement could include the challenge of managing trade-offs and how to place societal interests ahead of institutional and sectoral benefits, and also to use multi-disciplinary expertise to develop a growing culture of assuming collective responsibility.

Therefore, South Africa calls for a more coordinated approach at all levels of the institutions to implement the required changes, to empower staff to transform curricula towards a sustainable development perspective, and to have a more dedicated focus on dismantling boundaries among disciplines that inhibit the potential to address complex sustainable development issues to the benefit of all segments of society.

South Africa can demonstrate at a practical level how the role of education in transmitting sustainable development values is critical in supporting the implementation of the SDGs. The country has through the Youth Environmental Services (YES) Programme, the GroenSebenza (meaning “green work” in our vernacular) and the Youth Jobs in Waste Programme created an incubation programme for the transfer of green skills, training and capacity-development for the youth.