

2009 G8 University Students' Summit
Palermo Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development,
Culture of Lawfulness and Heritage of Peace
(Palermo Declaration)

University Students and young representatives coming from G8 Member Nations, "Outreach Five" (O5), and countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea gathered in Palermo (Italy), on 8th - 9th, of May 2009, to attend the "2009 G8 University Students' Summit" (hereinafter G8 USS).

The purpose of the G8 USS was to allow University students to take an active part to the wider G8 debate and to enhance their contribution towards the possibility of a globally harmonious and sustainable growth, with culture, lawfulness and dignity all playing a key role.

The young participants were invited to debate around two themes – Education for Sustainable development, Culture of Lawfulness and Heritage of Peace – and to endorse a final declaration ("Palermo Declaration"), to be presented during the G8 University Summit (Turin, 18-19 May 2009).

Foreword

The Students attending the **University Students' Summit** acknowledge the key role that education plays in creating an harmonious and respectful society and in building a culture of peace, sustainable development and lawfulness.

The students agree on the following principles and calls for action:

a) Education for Sustainable development

A1. Economy and sustainability shall proceed at the same pace

The current economic crisis can be seen as an unprecedented opportunity to reinvest in our social and environmental capital and to make sure that the economy and sustainability proceed at the same pace. To achieve this, a strong alliance is of the utmost urgency among institutions, the private sector and civil society, that might actively involve all social actors, national and international, in promoting positive production and consumption models, which focus on primarily on “quality of life” and global well-being.

A2. Education, as a catalyst for change, shall be expanded

A new model of economic and social development needs to be supported by strong and coherent measures in the field of “education”, in its widest sense of lifelong learning. This is the best way to form critical and independently thinking people who are aware of the positive change needed for sustainable growth. Education shall be provided not only in schools and Universities, but also in non-traditional settings through information, sensitization and training, where each one simultaneously plays the dual role of educator and learner. Education is also an essential agent of development and critical for empowering and giving skills to marginalised communities in developing countries.

A3. Universities need to lead the progress of the community

Universities should continue to expand their role of investors in young people, who are fundamental actors of change and can greatly contribute to disseminating a new socio-economic awareness. Universities should also serve as a forum for the discussion of new solutions, take a lead in the community and contribute towards its progress. Universities must be capable of connecting young people with other people and groups (the academia, the local society, the private sector, governmental institutions, students

and universities of other countries) and of actively engaging them not only in curricular learning programmes, but also in innovative activities and research.

b) Culture of lawfulness and heritage of peace

B1. Formal and Informal Education build democracy and active citizenship

Education is one of the pillars of the global society and the educational paths undertaken, both formal and informal, play an essential role in building democracy and in promoting active citizenship. In order for new generations to grow in an informed and responsible manner, it is of primary importance for Countries to adopt appropriate cultural strategies, especially in the ongoing historical phase in which mobility, driven by economic factors, has taken on an unprecedented dimension and Governments are reconsidering the way they interact.

B2. A global culture of lawfulness is needed to foster social and human well being

It is crucially important to promote, also outside the official training grounds, forums of in-depth analysis and comparison aimed at favouring the development of those human skills necessary for the spreading of both a true global culture of lawfulness and of respect of the rules and dynamics of social co-existence. The dissemination and consolidation of a global culture of lawfulness and peace shall be fostered by international agreements on legal standards, by networking systems favouring the exchange of experiences, by improving social mobility processes and by spreading communication initiatives at all levels: regional, national, international.

B3. Art is a fertile ground to grow up the heritage of peace

Art represents a fertile ground on which to build a bridge between different cultures and identities. All the cultures of the world can establish a dialogue through art, intended as a set of creative actions that draw upon the highest sense of humanity. Notwithstanding their specificities and apparent diversities, human individuals have a lot in common and can share their common heritage precisely through knowledge and art. The growing interaction between cultures, the development of global standards for individual behavior and the spread of communication processes ultimately represent yet another opportunity in which to increasingly voice the need for peace throughout the world.

In conclusion,

Conscious that access to higher education is a privilege for the few;

Conscious of the responsibility that we have to put our knowledge at the service of society;

Conscious of the opportunity given to us to suggest solutions and leaving to the Heads of States the responsibility to allocate resources for the implementation of our suggestions;

The Students call upon Heads of State and Government to implement the following:

1. Universities should become a laboratory for developing and implementing projects aimed at finding actual solutions at the service of local and global society. These projects must be turned into active interventions contributing to cultural and technological transformation, in order to overcome social and political tensions, and therefore promoting peace, lawfulness and sustainable development.
2. Dialogue between universities and all actors in society should be strengthened to find shared solutions and to enhance the capital of knowledge that too often remains circumscribed within academic debates, even though it could become instrumental for implementing sustainable development.
3. Universities should adopt an interdisciplinary approach in their educational curricula and research, supported by appropriate funding, thus promoting decisional processes that are conscientious, balanced and responsible at the economic, social, technical, political, human and environmental level.
4. The training of teachers, at all educational levels, should be based on principles and practices that ensure the promotion of a culture of lawfulness and peace adequate to the challenges of our times.
5. Common values of cooperation and tolerance should be considered central elements of the culture of sustainable diversity, acknowledging that stereotypes, ignorance and lack of self- and other-awareness as well as social and economic unbalances can be dangerous vehicles or causes of conflicts.
6. Democratic values and processes disseminated in formal and informal education should rise from principles of inclusion and participation, respecting local and indigenous traditions and cultures.
7. International and domestic policies should be directed at encouraging cooperation and dialogue among young generations and between these and the generations that currently have decision-making powers.