

World Environmental
Education Congress
Network

9th World Environmental Education Congress

Vancouver, Canada, 9-13 September 2017

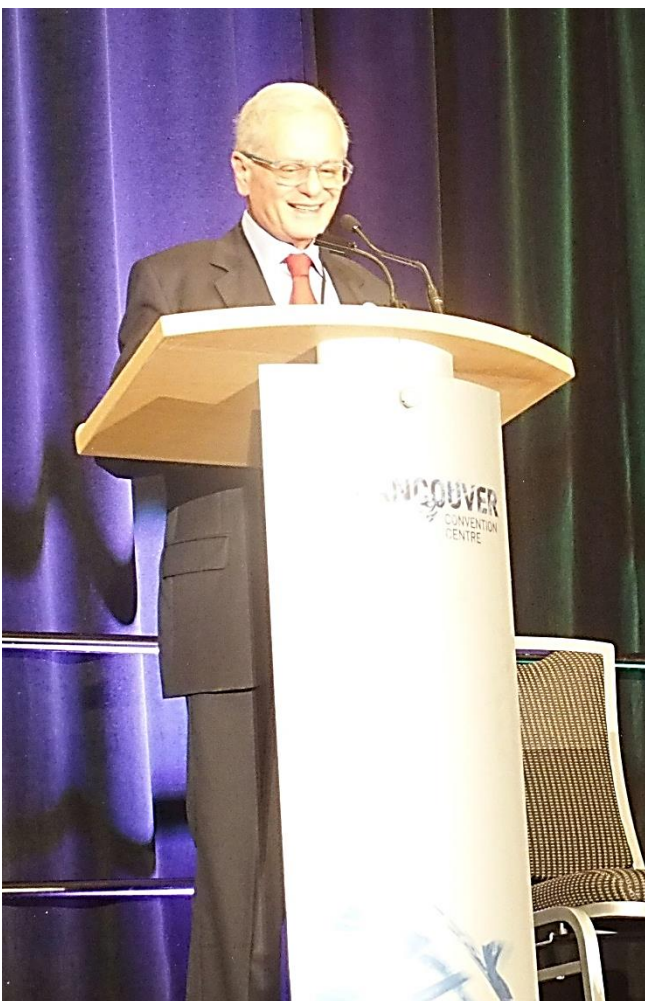
Natureenvironment. Weaving new connections

Mario Salomone

Secretary-General WEEC – World Environmental Education Congress

Opening ceremony

9th September 2017



Your Royal Highness Princess Lalla Hasnaa, Honourable Judith Guichon Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, distinguished representatives of the UNESCO and UNEP, distinguished representatives of Government of Georgia, dear friends and colleagues involved in the environmental education, my warmest thanks for attending the 9th World environmental education congress here in Vancouver.

It is for me an immense pleasure to open the WEEC 2017 congress and it is a wonderful opportunity for the congress to be hosted in Vancouver, thanks to the Simon Frazer University, the Institute for Environmental Learning and its director David Zandvliet. There are two good reasons why I can say it:

- 1) This year we celebrate significant anniversaries, as Tbilisi+40 and *Brundtland report*+30, and more momentous events.
- 2) Greenpeace was founded here in Vancouver in 1971, and in the Nineties of the past century the Ecological Footprint indicator was created at University of British Columbia.

Two years ago, opening the 8th WEEC congress in Gothenburg, Sweden, I denounced that “too many wars, too many walls, too many refugees and migrants, too many social injustices, huge ecological debt, too much violence, excessive dangerous military expenditures...” are troubling our planet.

Two years later, the situation is pretty much the same or possibly worst: terrorism and violence are growing, the Sixth mass extinction is running at the rate of 30,000 species per year, the

climate change is worsening and not so far from here, the Arctic sea ice decline opens the Northwest and Northeast Passages to tankships and marine trade.

The Overshoot Day - the date when humanity's annual demand on nature exceeds what Earth can regenerate over the entire year - in 2017 advanced to 2nd August, but in Australia, Canada and USA it was reached in March, and in France, United Kingdom, Italy and Spain it was reached in May.

On the contrary, in Mexico it was on 1st September, in Armenia on 28th October, in Colombia on 26th November, ending with Honduras on 31st December, unfortunately the most "virtuous" country.

So, there is a more and more huge ecological debt between the humankind and the Planet Earth and between richer and poorer countries. As I said on the 8th congress, «We are burning our future and the right of future generations to enjoy the great beauty of the Earth and its biodiversity, and the right to live safely and peacefully».

Social and environmental problems are closely linked: the pillage of the natural resources, the rape of biodiversity and the global insecurity are the two sides of the same coin.

Our answers: the environmental education is more and more crucial and more and more decisive. We must change behaviors, paradigms, patterns.

We must improve the environmental education enhancing research and action, we must enhance our networks, we must remember to all actors the pivot role of education, knowledge, culture as basic drivers of human societies and activities. We must fight both for peace and environmental protection.

For this reason, the WEEC Network is launching an international campaign you are invited to endorse and support for a World Environmental Education Day, to be celebrated each year on 14th October.

Why on 14th October?

Because on 14th October 1977 the Tbilisi Conference opened, so now we can jointly celebrate Tbilisi+40 and the birth of a global - even if ideal - annual meeting which everybody can organize himself and everywhere, all over the world.

My warmest wishes, have a joyful and productive congress!



Tbilisi+40 at the 9th WEEEC.
Ekaterine Grigalava, Deputy
Minister of Ministry of
Environment and Natural
Resources Protection of Georgia
and Mario Salomone, Secretary-
General WEEC