

# Innovations for Environmental Education: MOOCs

Green Room event, Conf. Room 11, UN Complex, Nairobi

23 June 2014



## Background

- Over 40 participants participated in the 2014 Green Room Event which was organized on the margins of the historic inaugural United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA);
- Under the theme of “Innovations for Environmental Education”, the forty- five minute session focused on the upcoming MOOC on *Disasters, Ecosystems and Risk Reduction*;
- It was organized by UNEP’s Environmental Education and Training Unit (EETU) in collaboration with Post Conflict and Disaster Management Branch (PCDMB) and the Cologne University of Applied Sciences and Center for Natural Resources Development.

## Opening Plenary

- **Neville Ash**, *Deputy Director, Division of Environmental Policy Implementation (DEPI), UNEP* welcomed participants. He referred to the large global coverage of the MOOC, in support of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014;
- **Sylvia Heuchemer**, *Vice-President, Academic Affairs, Cologne University of Applied Science (CUAS)*, provided a video message highlighting the MOOC partnership approach;
- **Mahesh Pradhan**, *Chief, Environmental Education and Training Unit, UNEP/DEPI*, mentioned that the MOOC was based on the Masters Module on Disasters, Environment and Risk Reduction developed earlier by UNEP and CNRD. The MOOC was partially supported through the Eye on Environment Education Special Initiative, and is linked to the Global Universities Partnership on Environment and Sustainability (GUPES);
- **Lars Ribbe**, *Center for Natural Resources and Development (CNRD), CUAS, Germany* gave an overview of the innovative open multi-disciplinary course and its contribution to the achievement of MDG7. He mentioned that the MOOC will consist of two tracks: *leadership track* that contains four hours of learning for policymakers, decision makers and senior professionals for an overview and; *Experts Track* that comprises sixteen hours of instruction for professionals and students who seek more in-depth learning;
- **Keith Alverson**, *Coordinator, Climate Change Adaptation & Terrestrial Ecosystems Branch, UNEP* highlighted challenges/opportunities of MOOCs, based on his experience.

## Discussions

- Need to enhance utility of MOOCs at different levels, especially for students;
- Promote field-based examples that are cross-cutting (all geographical regions);
- Integration of hands-on approaches for learning opportunities within the MOOC;
- Tailor the MOOC to specific geographic regions/sub-regions as the next step;
- Partner with student bodies and regional network/knowledge hubs in promoting environmental education at grass-root levels; and
- Promote the utility and scalability of MOOCs for professional development.