

**Declaration of Science Center and Museum Leadership Worldwide¹
to the United Nations High-Level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals
(MDG Summit)
September 20–22, 2010, New York City**

Leaders from Science Centers and Museums Worldwide,

Endorsing the Millennium Declaration adopted in 2000 by all 189 member states of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, and the subsequent commitment to action set forth in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);

Acknowledging the need to focus attention on strong, accelerated collective action toward the achievement of the MDGs, and to that end, to engage the public in critical discourse and focused education concerning the science-based underpinnings of the many challenges and opportunities set forth by the MDGs;

Recognizing that the sharing of knowledge is an extremely powerful tool in the effort to ensure economic progress, social welfare, and stewardship of a fragile planet;

Convinced that all nations should strive to ensure that their citizens have essential knowledge of the scientific bases for decisions that will drive innovation and inspire sustainable use of increasingly limited resources;

Confident that the communication of scientific principles and their applications can inspire citizens to value the scientific enterprise and the importance of objective decision-making concerning the environmental, economic, social, and humanitarian challenges facing the planet today;

1. *Welcome* the upcoming MDG Summit, scheduled for September 20–22, 2010, in New York City;

2. *Urge* the MDG Summit delegates to issue strong endorsement for national, regional, and global initiatives of public engagement and education on these critical topics;

3. *Call for* specific recognition of the valuable role that informal science education platforms can play in the broader discourse and the deeper education of youth and adults concerning these global challenges;

4. *Call, as well,* upon the MDG Summit delegates to acknowledge “The Toronto Declaration,” the principles endorsed by the 400 delegates from 51 countries at the Fifth Science Centre World Congress, June 14–19, 2008. Specifically:

“We, the participants in the Fifth Science Centre World Congress, believe that science is an important tool for a better life on our planet.

“We advocate that all citizens should have access to a science center or its services in their own region. We will use our collective expertise and experience in helping to expand the activities of our sector to places and communities where science centers are needed and wanted but not yet established.

“We commit to work together to overcome cultural, physical, social, economic, and geographic barriers to engage and connect people through science.

“We will actively seek out issues related to science and society where the voices of citizens should be heard, and we will ensure that dialogue occurs.

“We will work together to identify how science centers can contribute to the achievement of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

“We will search for mechanisms to create a better future for all through global engagement with issues of local, national, and global relevance, including environmental awareness, science education, and innovation.”

5. *Strongly urge* the MDG Summit delegates to incorporate within the outcome document of the MDG Summit process, the following specific references to the valuable role of informal science education platforms in accelerating progress toward achievement of the MDGs by 2015. Specifically:

“Progress toward the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 requires increased commitment by all countries to greater public discourse and education about these critical issues;

“Public discourse and education about the successes, best practices, opportunities, as well as the challenges and obstacles to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, must be based on objective understanding of the scientific underpinnings of these global concerns;

“Informal science education platforms—science centers and museums worldwide —are highly visible and trusted hosts of activity, dialogue, and discourse about science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. They support the skills needed for effective problem solving, creativity, innovation, critical thinking, and decision-making, therefore enhancing lifelong learning of science and technology;

“Science centers and museums worldwide should be recognized as important resources and contributors to strengthening the knowledge bases for decisions concerning continued progress toward achievement of the Millennium Development Goals;

“Delegates to the UN High-Level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG Summit) therefore call on all nations to commit the support necessary for science centers and museums to fulfill the valuable role of 1) helping citizens worldwide to engage more effectively in efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, and 2) preparing the next

generation of leaders and global citizens for further successes in responsible stewardship of the planet.”

The issuance of this Declaration is inspired by the fact that, each year, 290 million citizens actively participate in the programs, events, exhibitions, and outreach initiatives organized by 2,400 science centers worldwide. Science centers stimulate curiosity and develop inquiring minds. Science centers foster accessibility and appreciation for science, helping people to grasp the context of scientific advances and understand the role of science in complex issues facing society today. Science centers operate across geographical, economic, political, religious, and cultural boundaries. They impact the skills, achievement, education, and well-being of current and future generations.

The youth who attend science centers are growing up in a rapidly changing world and can become critical “agents for change.” Today’s participants in science center programs are tomorrow’s leaders and key decision-makers. They will be better positioned to understand the context of scientific discoveries and to contribute to dialogue on important topics of health, environment, energy, natural resources, and more.

¹ Asia Pacific Network of Science and Technology Centres (ASPAC)
Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC)
Chinese Association of Natural Science Museums
European Network of Science Centers and Museums (Ecsite)
National Council of Science Museums India (NCSM)
Network for the Popularization of Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean (RedPop)
Southern African Association of Science and Technology Centres (SAASTEC)