SUMMIT HIGHLIGHTS

Ronald Swartz (left), Superintendent-General, Western Cape Education Department, South Africa, said:

"Anyone who has ever worked on behalf of animal welfare is sure to be asked, sooner or later, "why are you so concerned about animals' sufferings when there are so many humans living in wretchedness?" And indeed there is some sense in this question as long as we see ourselves as being essentially separate and different from the natural environment and its kingdoms. But to think like that is to remain stuck in zero-sum thinking, where one thing can benefit only at the expense of another. And there is no need for us to stay trapped in this notion. We are not doomed to any 'either-or' choice between treating animals better and treating humans better.

"We need to replace that zero-sum notion with the win-win realisation that caring about humans and caring about animals are not mutually exclusive: they are two aspects of the same consciousness, and each one reinforces the other.....

"How we treat animals and how we treat each other are two stems that grow from the same root. If there are thorns of neglect, contempt or cruelty on one, we can be sure to find them on the other. The essence of this new approach to the world is a spirit based on respect, and respect is indivisible....

"We urgently need to help our young people build a better future, a future founded on the very values that Humane Education aims to inculcate. This is why it is such very good news that our learners will soon be enjoying the benefits of Humane Education via our new National Curriculum. This is no mere reshuffling of paper: the importance of Humane Education has been acknowledged and endorsed by Professor Kader Asmal, Minister of Education, himself. It has been accepted as a vital component of Environmental Education and will be incorporated into the national curriculum by as early as next year.... The Humane Education Trust is very much a partner in the phasing-in process."