



The 9th World Sustainability Forum
13-15 SEPTEMBER 2021 | ONLINE



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

9th World Sustainability Forum (virtual, 13-15 September 2021)

Date: **Monday 13 September 2021 at 11h00 CEST (90min session)**

<https://wsf-9.sciforum.net/>

Type of contribution: **Session (virtual on zoom)**

Organization: **International Association of Universities (IAU)**

www.iau-aiu.net, <http://www.iau-hesd.net/>

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Title of session:

Higher Education and Research – How universities around the world engage with Sustainability and build partnerships for the SDGs

Speakers:

- Welcome by **Hilligje van't Land**, Secretary General International Association of Universities (IAU)
- Moderator: **Pam Fredman**, IAU President, Former Rector of University of Gothenburg, Sweden
- Three representatives from HEIs from the IAU Global HESD Cluster and one from IAU partner organisation:
 - **Ole Petter Ottersen**, Rector, Karolinska Institutet, Sweden (*IAU HESD Cluster on SDG 3*)
 - **Heila Lotz-Sisitka**, Professor, Rhodes University, South Africa (*IAU HESD Cluster on SDG 4*)
 - **Dr Jonghwi Park**, Academic Programme Officer and the Head of Innovation and Education at UNU-IAS, United Nations University (*IAU partner organisation representative*)
 - **Rhoda Wanyenze**, Professor and Dean, School of Public Health, College of Health Sciences, Makerere University, Uganda (*IAU HESD Cluster on SDG 3*)

Abstract:

The proposed session aims to make the case at the Sci Forum for **higher education's role for sustainable development**, and will present the work of the International Association of Universities (IAU) on its strategic priority **HESD** (Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Development) and how it fosters HESD around the world. Strategies for increased collaboration between universities and

other higher education institutions (HEIs) around the world will be outlined, supported by presentations from representatives from the IAU Global HESD Cluster. The session will focus specifically on **SDG 3: Good Health and Wellbeing; SDG 4: Quality Education; and SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals.**

In 2021 and beyond, partnerships between different stakeholders, with diverse backgrounds and based in multiple parts of the world, are not only possible, but essential for implementing the UN Agenda 2030. To do so, innovative approaches, flexibility and persistence are needed to form strong and fruitful partnerships, while working in silos may be needed at times it certainly is an obstacle to the development of the new approaches to the challenges we face today. Higher education in particular has a huge potential to foster interdisciplinary and innovative approaches to partnership-building. The UN Agenda 2030 and the associated goals call for such new approaches. Higher education should be seen as an essential partner in the processes addressing the challenges on the way to a more sustainable future. At the same time, HEIs are uniquely placed to set an example for other sectors.

Next to **SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals**, two other SDGs have been very much in the focus of global attention lately: SDG 3 and SDG 4. While all Goals are interconnected, the sessions will go into more depth on these two while linking them to larger challenges the world is facing. The pandemic has shown how **SDG 3** is crucial in many ways – aim include to prevent infectious diseases and pandemics, better train health personnel, research vaccines and cures, bring attention to mental health but also finding digital health solutions.

SDG 4 is at the heart of UNESCO’s Roadmap to 2030 and the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) strategy; education is a key enabler for all 17 SDGs. This renewed emphasis on education as a means to foster societal transformation comes at a critical point, as educational institutions continue to grapple with the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and take advantage of opportunities to develop a more peaceful and sustainable world.

The flagship initiative of IAU’s HESD work is the **IAU Global Cluster on HESD**. Launched in 2018, the Cluster work will be used as the main **example for the realisation of a multi-stakeholder partnership for the SDGs** during the session at WSF. The Cluster consists of 16 lead HEIs, each leading on one of the SDGs 1 to 16; IAU leads the work on SDG 17: global partnerships. The lead institutions each work with up to 8 ‘satellite’ institutions to advance on a particular SDG and initiate concrete projects, while ensuring synergies among all goals. Furthermore, the Cluster promotes the role and potential that HEIs globally have in order to achieve the SDGs and the UN Agenda 2030. HEIs have already started to address the SDGs in multiple ways, including at teaching, research, leadership, and campus operations. The Cluster encourages collaboration and a holistic method to work with the SDGs, focusing specifically on the whole institution approach.

Within the overarching goal of “Accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (UN SDG Summit 2019), the Cluster has two concrete objectives: First, to serve as a **resource and networking hub for HEIs** around the world for institutions already engaged in SDGs locally and seeking partnerships, and those starting to engage with the SDGs and who turn to the Cluster for collaboration and guidance to translate and advance SDGs in local, national and international contexts. Second, the IAU Global Cluster aims to serve as a **global voice for higher education and sustainable development**. The IAU advocates for this at the annual UN High Level Political Forum and IAU International Conferences, and other events where IAU is invited to speak.

The session will start with short input presentations, providing examples of practice and steps for building cooperation networks such as the IAU Global Cluster. Representatives from HEIs from the IAU

Global Cluster will share their experience and exchange with participants, to identify potential steps to establish and maintain partnerships for the SDGs, in particular SDG 3 and SDG 4. The questions of how collaboration and education will look like in a sustainable future will be the guiding principle throughout the session. Participants will be presented with practical approaches of how partnerships can be formed, projects initiated, and multi-stakeholder approaches coordinated.

Session outline:

- **Welcome and short introduction** of IAU and IAU HESD Cluster for SDG17 (5 min)
- **Input presentation IAU** (Hillegje van 't Land, 10 min):
 - o SDG 17 as a key to implementing all other SDGs
 - o Zooming in: SDG3 and SDG4 – two SDGs at the forefront of sustainable recovery
- **Examples of practice** (presentation and discussion, moderated by Pam Fredman)
 - o **From universities:** Three Cluster representatives will present their institution's approach to sustainability, for instance regarding cooperation/research projects between universities on specific SDGs or institutional strategy (10 min each)
 - o **From organizations:** **IAU partner UNU** on Partnerships within the Higher Education sector and cross-sectoral (10 min)
- Q & A (15 min) Speakers, Moderator and participant input (chat)
- **Conclusions** (10 min)

More on IAU's work for Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Development (HESD):

The **International Association of Universities (IAU)** has advocated for the role universities and other higher education institutions (HEIs) have played in support of sustainable development since the early 1990s. Already in 1993, the *IAU Kyoto Declaration* called for higher education leaders to better articulate HE's work to achieve a sustainable future. This was reaffirmed in 2014 with the *IAU Iquitos Statement*. IAU was one of the strongest advocates for the inclusion of higher education as a key stakeholder for achieving Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, something that was missing in the previous Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The adoption of *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and the related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 was the start of an increased interest in sustainable development beyond the initial circles.

HEIs have increasingly engaged with SDGs, as shown in the results presented in the [IAU 2nd Global Survey Report on Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Development](#). Next to its surveys on HESD, the IAU HESD team coordinates the work of the IAU Global HESD Cluster, works on specialized publications, represents the IAU community and values at events, and updates the specialized HESD portal and social media with current initiatives on sustainability in higher education.

See also: <https://iau-aiu.net/HESD>, <http://www.iau-hesd.net/>