



World Earth Month

**Strengthening International Higher Education  
Cooperation for Sustainability**

29 April, 2025

Session 1: International Higher Education  
Cooperation for Sustainability – Policies, Practices,  
and Networks



## Background

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In response to escalating global challenges that hinder societal progress and sustainability, higher education institutions must embrace a transformative approach. As emphasized in ‘“[Reimagining our Futures Together](#)”: A New Social Contract for Education’ (UNESCO 2021), education has the potential to be a powerful catalyst for change, making it imperative to transform higher education.

Situated at the nexus of knowledge and practice, higher education plays a pivotal role in promoting international cooperation, particularly in the Global South. Through collaboration among diverse stakeholders—including academia, policymakers, civil society, youth, students, and international organizations—higher education institutions can drive sustainability efforts through various frameworks such as South-South cooperation and Public-Private Partnerships.

This session, as part of the broader event, will explore how policies, practices, and networks can enhance sustainability in higher education through international cooperation, especially in the Global South. Participants will engage in discussions on existing initiatives, best practices, and strategies to strengthen global partnerships.

## Objectives

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- Facilitate discussions on international cooperation in higher education, with a focus on sustainability and the Global South.
- Highlight good practices and initiatives that contribute to sustainability in higher education through international partnerships.
- Identify key challenges and opportunities for enhancing cooperation among universities, policymakers, and other stakeholders.
- Explore the role of regional and global networks in supporting sustainable higher education development.

## Expected outcomes

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- Increased awareness of successful international cooperation initiatives in higher education for sustainability.
- Identification of key policy recommendations and best practices for strengthening higher education networks.

- Strengthened dialogue among stakeholders on the role of higher education in achieving sustainable development goals.

## Details

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- Date: 29<sup>th</sup> April 2025
- Location: UNESCO Headquarters (Paris, France)
- Time: 90 minutes
- Room capacity: 96 people
- Language: English
- Interpretation: Spanish and French interpretation services will be provided for the event to ensure inclusivity and accessibility for a global audience.

## Agenda (10:00 – 11:30)

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Time	Session	Description
10:00 – 10:10 (10 minutes)	Welcome & Opening Remarks	<p>Welcome and introduction to the session, emphasizing the role of international cooperation in higher education for sustainability.</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Mr. Francesc Pedro, Director, UNESCO IESALC</p> <p><b>High-Level Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mr. Francesc Pedro, Director, UNESCO IESALC</li><li>• Mr. Romero Hayman, Senior Vice President, Strategy, and General Manager, National Geographic Learning</li></ul>
10:10 – 10:40 (30 minutes)	Roundtable 1	<p>Policies and frameworks that support sustainable higher education cooperation.</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Mr. Francesc Pedro, Director, UNESCO IESALC</p> <p><b>Panelists:</b></p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ms. Mayada Adil, Young Leader for the Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations Youth Office – 5 mins</li> <li>• Mr. Noah Sobe, Chief of Higher Education Section, UNESCO – 5 mins</li> <li>• Ms. Hayley Lauren Holuj, Curriculum Senior Specialist, UAE Ministry of Education – 5 mins</li> <li>• Mr. Benito Corona Vasquez, Professor, Universidad de Las Americas Puebla &amp; UNESCO Chair on Hydrometeorological Risks – 5 mins</li> <li>• Ms. Sandra den Otter, Vice Provost Global Engagement, Queen's University – 5 mins</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mayada, from a youth and student perspective, how can international cooperation in higher education become more inclusive and responsive to the needs of young people advocating for and acting on sustainability?</i></li> <li>• <i>Noah, what policy gaps currently hinder effective collaboration among universities, policymakers, civil society, and public and private sector actors in advancing sustainability initiatives?</i></li> <li>• <i>Hayley, how can ministries create enabling environments that empower universities to actively engage in international cooperation for sustainability?</i></li> <li>• <i>Benito, what role does South-South and triangular cooperation play in enhancing sustainability efforts within higher education?</i></li> <li>• <i>Sandra, what institutional policies and international frameworks have you found most effective in fostering long-</i></li> </ul>
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		<p><i>term, sustainable cooperation in higher education, and how can universities leverage these to build resilient and equitable global partnerships?</i></p>
<p><b>10:40-11:10 (30 minutes)</b></p>	<p><b>Roundtable 2</b></p>	<p>Best practices, challenges, and strategies for strengthening networks and collaboration.</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Mr. Francesc Pedro, Director, UNESCO IESALC</p> <p><b>Panelists:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ms. Inés Yábar, Climate Advocate, Changemaker, and Community Builder – 5 mins</li> <li>• Mr. Romero Hayman, Senior Vice President, Strategy, and General Manager, National Geographic Learning – 5 mins</li> <li>• Mr. Keith Holmes, Research Coordinator, UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme, Future of Learning and Innovation Division, UNESCO – 5 mins</li> <li>• Mr. Elio Azar, Climate advocate &amp; Special Initiatives Coordinator, Principles for Peace Foundation – 5 mins</li> <li>• Ms. Yuma Inzolia, Chief of Capacity Building, UNESCO IESALC– 5 mins</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ines, what are some successful youth-led practices in sustainability, what challenges have they faced along the way, and what opportunities have they explored out of those challenges?</i></li> <li>• <i>Romero, what are some successful examples of international higher education partnerships that have advanced sustainability goals from the experiences of National Geographic Learning?</i></li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Elio, what is the role of civil society in strengthening global sustainability efforts in and with higher education, particularly through international cooperation in the Global South?</i></li> <li>• <i>Keith, how has the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme contributed to international cooperation in higher education across different disciplines?</i></li> <li>• <i>Yuma, what strategies have proven most effective in strengthening inter-university networks focused on sustainability, especially among leadership?</i></li> </ul>
<b>11:10 – 11:25 (15 minutes)</b>	<b>Q&amp;A Session</b>	<p>Open floor for participants to engage with speakers, ask questions, and contribute insights.</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Mr. Francesc Pedro, Director, UNESCO IESALC</p>
<b>11:25 – 11:30 (5 minutes)</b>	<b>Moving forward</b>	<p>Summary of key takeaways and final reflections on the path forward.</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Mr. Francesc Pedro, Director, UNESCO IESALC</p>

## Target Audience

- University and higher education institution administrators
- Policymakers, particularly those focused on education and sustainability in the Global South
- Civil society organizations committed to education and sustainability
- Youth leaders, students, and future thinkers driving sustainable change
- Representatives from international organizations and regional and global education networks