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Focus on environmental risks and human security

University of Bonn and United Nations University launch joint Master's programme

Recognizing and tackling the consequences of climate change, environmental risks and global social change are key challenges for the future. Now, the city of Bonn will become a new source for experts trained to tackle such challenges, with the official launch of the joint Master's programme, "Geography of Environmental Risks and Human Security." The first class is comprised of 25 students from around the world.

In a festive ceremony held in the Alfred Philippon Auditorium of the University of Bonn, Department of Geography, the Rector of the University of Bonn, Prof. Dr. Jürgen Fohrmann, and the Vice Rector of the United Nations University (UNU-ViE) in Europe, Prof. Dr. Jakob Rhyner, in the presence of the Science Minister of NRW, Svenja Schulze, inaugurated the first joint Master's programme organized by a state university in cooperation with a UN institution.

This Master's programme represents a major achievement in post secondary education policy and international law. It is the first time that a university grounded in national university law and a UN institution based on international law have successfully joined forces as institutions. "This joint programme will serve as a model for academic partnerships with UNU. Consequently, as a prototype for additional courses of study, the eyes of the world will be on us. And Bonn as a Federal city will become even more visible as *the* German location of the United Nations" explained Professor Fohrmann.

According to Minister Schulze, by being involved in this initiative, Bonn is writing a chapter of "international post-secondary education history". She emphasized the programme's significance for handling risks such as natural forces, climate change, and environmental destruction by adding, "Consequently, this new course of study will focus on humans, linking the great global challenges in environmental and climate protection to security issues. I hope that this Bonn Master's programme will serve as a global model."

Professor Rhyner, who chairs the Institute for Environment and Human Security at the United Nations University (UNU-EHS) in Bonn, hopes that this course of study will send a message; "There is a great global need for innovative courses of study that represent a bridge between research and application. With this new Master's programme, we are taking an important first step here in Bonn. We will teach students both the scientific basis as well as its application in the context of international organizations. We hope that this innovative model can also be adopted by other universities and partner organizations."

This joint English-language programme will award successful students a "Master of Science" (M.Sc.) degree. In four semesters, participants will, in addition to completing teaching modules, also perform an internship at a UN or other international organization, as well as write a master's thesis. In its first year, the program accepted 25 students from 14 different countries, with roughly half of all students coming from Germany. On the side of the University of Bonn, the Department of Geography (Geographisches Institut; GIUB) has assumed teaching duties in the programme, and the United Nations University side the Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS). Teaching activities will build on the proven research cooperation between the UNU and the University of Bonn.

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