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UNU-IAS

Institute for the Advanced Study
of Sustainability

UNU-IAS Strategic Plan, 2016–2017

16 December 2015

Overview

This document presents the strategic plan for UNU-IAS during the 2016–2017 biennium. Section 1 outlines the overall strategic direction of the institute and the international policy agendas towards which its activities will be oriented. Section 2 describes how UNU-IAS research and policy development activities will seek to contribute to each of these international agendas. Section 3 provides the strategic direction for UNU-IAS postgraduate degrees and training activities. The institute's Communications Strategy is summarized in Section 4, and its Funding Strategy in Section 5.

1. OVERALL STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Over the next two years UNU-IAS will further develop its research, policy development and capacity building activities to advance global efforts towards a more sustainable future. UNU-IAS has developed these activities on the basis of sustainability science, and is committed to continuing in this direction. Sustainability science will provide the overarching framework for the work of the institute, encompassing a broad range of issues such as resilience and governance.

UNU-IAS will generate interdisciplinary scientific knowledge, with a focus on topics that are high on the international policy agenda. By engaging both the policy and academic communities the institute will produce science-based inputs to inform policymaking. Through this approach UNU-IAS aims to be well positioned to respond to policy needs and emerging challenges, while striving for academic excellence through high-quality research and teaching.

Targeted International Policy Agendas

Under the overarching theme of sustainability science, UNU-IAS research, policy development and teaching will be oriented towards three international policy agendas:

- (i) **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:**
With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, its 17 SDGs and 169 targets, global attention will now turn to implementation. UNU-IAS research and policy engagement will focus on the development of governance structures for effective implementation of the SDGs. It will also promote the integration of science–policy interfaces in policymaking for the SDGs, with a particular focus on global processes for follow-up and review, as well as assessment of the agenda.
- (ii) **Biodiversity and ecosystem services:**
The critical links between biodiversity and sustainable development were reaffirmed at the 12th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in October 2014. Mid-term assessment indicated that additional action is required to keep progress on track for achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. UNU-IAS research in this area will target assessment and evaluation of biodiversity and ecosystem services. UNU-IAS has been leading the development of the assessment function of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), and is now shifting its focus to target IPBES capacity development and participatory scenario building.
- (iii) **Climate change and disaster risk reduction (DRR):**
UNU-IAS research will contribute to implementation of the Paris Agreement, addressing both climate change mitigation and adaptation. A new project will advance international cooperation on low carbon technology. At the same time, since the adoption of the Sendai Framework on DRR 2015–2030 in March 2015, global attention has now turned towards implementation. UNU-IAS research will focus on the human and social impacts of disasters, producing policy recommendations on disaster-induced displacement, risk communication and technological hazards.

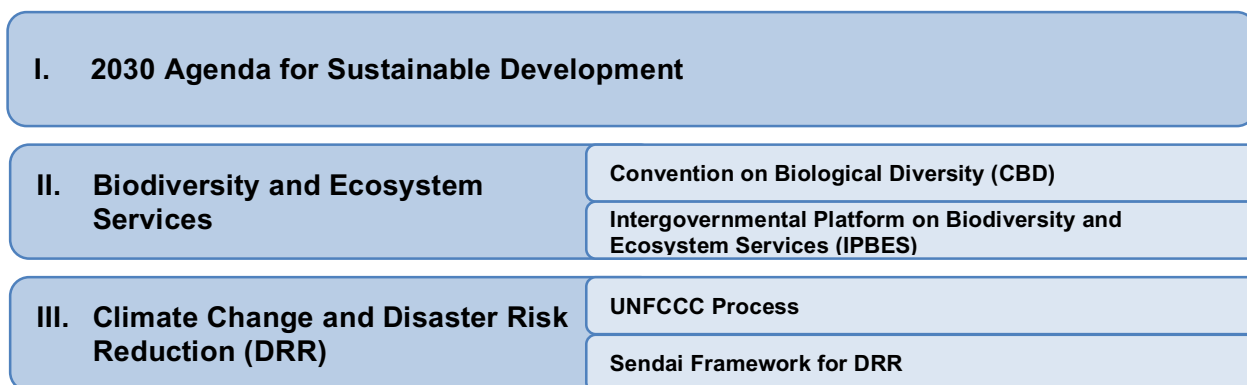


Figure 1: Targeted international policy agendas

2. STRATEGIC PLANS FOR KEY RESEARCH PROJECTS

2.1. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Strategic Direction

UNU-IAS research and policy engagement will focus on identifying effective institutional architectures for implementation of the 2030 Agenda, with a specific focus on Asia. The institute also aims to further develop platforms for education and knowledge generation to advance sustainable solutions at the national and regional levels.

Action Plan

This strategic direction will be addressed through the following programmes, projects and activities, among others:

A. Governance for Achieving the SDGs

UNU-IAS research in this area will focus on governance issues related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While the new agenda was adopted in September 2015, the details of the institutional framework and structures for SDG implementation have yet to be clearly addressed.

As the success of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development depends upon national implementation and follow-up and review, a multilevel institutional architecture is needed to address these challenges. This architecture will need to translate global visions for sustainability into practice, operating across different platforms and ensuring accountability to the citizenry of member states. Accordingly, in responding to these challenges careful consideration is required of the differing capacities, priorities, and challenges of country-specific institutions, for better coordination and to build institutional and financial frameworks.

The goal of the research proposed under the Governance for Sustainable Development (GSD) project is to address these issues and to examine whether and how the SDGs could function as a mechanism for mainstreaming sustainability, and in doing so secure integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development. It will be implemented through multiple case studies, by comparing various national institutional architectures and responses through policy outcomes in addressing the SDGs.

The research will pursue two main objectives. One is to fill these gaps by identifying an effective institutional architecture and policy frameworks for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs at the international, national, and sub-national levels. In doing so it will make full use of the comparative advantages of UNU-IAS as a think-tank within the UN system that is based in Asia. The research will also develop regional, national, and sub-national frameworks and provide inputs for policymakers at these three levels. Another important issue will be the integration of effective science–policy interfaces in policymaking for the SDGs, in particular with global processes for follow-up and review, as well as assessment of the agenda.

In relation to educational and capacity building activities, a second objective of the research is to increase literacy on the SDGs among national and regional stakeholders. Knowledge sharing and capacity building will be conducted by disseminating research results and encouraging the exchange of information between various different actors, targeting national and regional stakeholders in particular. Wherever relevant, efforts will be made to incorporate the process and the result of the research into the postgraduate degree programmes of UNU-IAS.

The envisaged impact of the research will be to develop a coherent mechanism to incorporate sustainability concerns into national and sub-national policy formulation processes and link them effectively to the global-level SDGs vision. The expected results include:

- a. Strengthening of national and sub-national institutions for implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs;
- b. Development of regional and national frameworks for formulation and implementation of the SDGs;
- c. Development of effective and transparent science–policy interfaces at the national level, taking into account possibilities for regional cooperation and the needs of the global follow-up and review processes
- d. Provision of a policy toolkit for implementation of the 2030 Agenda to target governments and regional institutions; and
- e. Increasing knowledge and capacity of regional and national stakeholders on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

Potential target states for case studies have been identified in the Asia-Pacific region, including Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia and Japan. Findings from comparative case studies will be disseminated through workshops and public symposiums as well as policy briefs, country-based SDGs outlooks and articles in academic journals. In the short term, national SDGs workshops are planned in Australia, Indonesia and Malaysia and a regional Asia-Pacific SDGs workshop in Malaysia. These workshops will be carried out in collaboration with partners in the targeted countries, including Future Earth, national and regional SDSNs, government agencies, other UN offices and universities.

B. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

UNU-IAS is designated as a member of the Partner Networks, which are the main implementation mechanisms of the Global Action Programme (GAP) on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), the follow-up to the UN Decade of ESD. The GAP aims to contribute to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. The UNU-IAS ESD project is committed to implementing priority action areas of the GAP, including advancing policy, transforming learning and training environment as well as accelerating sustainable solutions at the local level.

The UNU-IAS ESD project comprises two effective initiatives for facilitating policy-relevant research projects that contribute to international debates and policy processes for sustainability: (i) the global multi-stakeholder network Regional Centres of Expertise (RCEs) on ESD, and (ii) the alliance of higher education institutions Promotion of Sustainability in Postgraduate Education and Research Network (ProSPER.Net).

The Global RCE Network, currently consisting of 138 RCEs around the world, is ideally positioned to translate global sustainable development policy and vision into local realities, undertaking global initiatives for sustainability while remaining sensitive to local contexts. UNU-IAS, through the Global RCE Service Centre, will further enhance the strategic partnership and collaboration among RCEs on specific thematic issues such as sustainable consumption and production, biodiversity, climate change and disaster risk reduction. The ESD Project will also support ProSPER.Net member universities to undertake 3–4 joint research projects each year, focusing on various sustainability issues such as (i) investigating how cities can mitigate and adapt to a changing climate; (ii) the impact of traditional food on health, and; (iii) the sustainability issues inherent in decentralized energy grids.

By engaging the networks and expertise of the RCEs and ProSPER.Net, UNU-IAS will implement a series of capacity development and leadership training programmes, targeting stakeholders including policymakers, young professionals and practitioners. For 2016–2017, the ESD Project is planning to organize a ProSPER.Net Young Researchers' School in India (February 2016), a ProSPER.Net Leadership Programme, a ProSPER.Net-Scopus Young Scientist Award, an ASEAN+3 Leadership Programme on Sustainable Production and Consumption, and an IPBES Capacity Building Workshop for RCEs. These programmes will be designed to provide innovative

platforms for knowledge generation and learning for transformation. Both policy-relevant research and capacity development and leadership programmes play significant roles in creating favourable policy environments and integrating sustainability in all sectors of society.

The ESD project will also advance the implementation of the SDGs through its activities on sustainable consumption and production (SCP), by contributing to the 10-Year Framework of Programmes (10YFP) on SCP, which was adopted at Rio+20. UNU-IAS, serving as one of the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Committee members for the Sustainable Lifestyle and Education Programme of 10YFP, will oversee the coordination and implementation of the programme, which identifies three work areas: (i) developing and replicating sustainable lifestyles including low-carbon lifestyles; (ii) educating for sustainable lifestyles; and (iii) transforming current and shaping future generation's lifestyles.

C. Education for Sustainable Development in Africa (ESDA)

Since 2008 this project has developed and implemented a joint postgraduate programme on sustainable development in Africa by working with eight leading African universities. In 2014 three master's degree programmes were initiated — on integrated rural development, sustainable urban development, and mining and mineral resources development — with the aim of shaping a new generation of professionals to face sustainability challenges in the region. These programmes are currently being offered by five of the eight African partner universities. A principal aim of the ESDA project during the 2016–2017 period will be to strengthen and improve the contents as well as the coverage of the programmes, in order to enhance the project's contribution to achieving the capacity-building goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The ESDA project will support the implementation of the three master's degree programmes by developing their learning materials. These materials will be developed through a series of Africa–Asia Knowledge Exchange Workshops, which will be hosted by the African partner universities. UNU-IAS will also build capacities among the faculty of African partner universities by organizing major international conferences, such as a special session at the International Conference on Sustainability Science (Stellenbosch, March 2016) focused on mineral resource extraction and an international seminar on “The Role of Higher Education and Industry for Sustainable Development in Africa” (Tokyo, October 2016).

The ESDA project will also help to establish a team of young researchers based at Asian universities working on sustainable development, who will collaborate with young researchers at the African partner universities. Based on their research a joint knowledge creation and sharing workshop will be organized in Africa towards the end of 2016.

The ESDA project is managed by a consortium that is chaired by a Vice Chancellor of one of the African Partner Universities, with the participation of senior faculty representatives from these universities. UNU-IAS serves as the secretariat for the consortium and the entire ESDA project.

In order to implement these initiatives, UNU-IAS has been building a long-term strategic partnership with the African Development Bank (AfDB), with an MOU agreed in June 2013. This partnership between UNU-IAS and AfDB has been effective in highlighting and raising the visibility of ESDA initiatives in Africa. UNU-IAS and AfDB are planning to co-organize a major side event during TICAD VI, which is scheduled to be held in Nairobi, Kenya in August 2016.

D. Water and Urbanization

UNU-IAS research in this area will develop policy tools for sustainable urban water environments, assisting developing countries in Asia to achieve SDG 6 (water and sanitation) and SDG 11 (safe, resilient and sustainable cities). Through case-study analysis the project will produce water quality models and a water sustainability index, which will predict future conditions and assess projected scenarios to inform policymaking. The project will also develop low-carbon strategies and policy analysis tools for improving urban water environments through a co-benefits approach. The outcomes of this project will be shared with stakeholders in developing countries through a series of workshops and publications.

2.2. Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

Strategic Direction

UNU-IAS activities in this area will feed directly into processes of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) through active links with their secretariats and assessment components, and contribute to the Future Earth initiative. In particular, UNU-IAS will develop scientific assessment processes at the regional and sub-regional levels, contribute to participatory scenario building for IPBES, and advance efforts to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Action Plan

This strategic direction will be addressed through the UNU-IAS Natural Capital and Biodiversity programme, focusing on the following activities:

A. Scientific Assessment and Scenarios

UNU-IAS will contribute to national, regional and global assessments for IPBES through research on location-based case studies and future scenarios in Japan, other Asian countries, and Africa, which will be published in peer-reviewed articles. The research will explore plausible future developments of human society and the consequences of these developments for biodiversity and ecosystem services. UNU-IAS will contribute to incorporating indigenous and local knowledge systems in IPBES assessments, scenarios and models, addressing one of the key thematic challenges for the platform. UNU-IAS will conduct an online survey to identify key direct and indirect drivers and potential pathways for biodiversity and ecosystem services in the Asia-Pacific region. The institute is also part of the authoring team for the IPBES regional assessment for the Asia-Pacific Region.

UNU-IAS will contribute to outlining a strategy for inclusion of participatory scenario building throughout the IPBES agenda in collaboration with ScenNet (Biodiversity and Scenarios Network), established 2015 through funding from the Belmont Forum.

In collaboration with the IPBES capacity building task force, UNU-IAS will develop training programmes with a specific focus on biodiversity and ecosystem services scenarios and modelling. In August 2016 UNU-IAS will organize a pilot training session as part of a major international conference organized by ScenNet in Montpellier, France. UNU-IAS will also develop an online directory for training programmes on scenarios and modelling to support capacity building for multiple end-users, which will be incorporated into the global database that is under development by ScenNet.

In 2016 UNU-IAS will co-organize an expert workshop on synergizing climate scenarios (IPCC) and ecosystem scenarios (IPBES), together with UNESCO. The outcomes of this workshop will be important scientific inputs for both IPCC and IPBES, as well as policy-relevant inputs to both UNFCCC and CBD processes.

B. Knowledge Generation and Sharing

UNU-IAS will draw upon its global networks to generate knowledge on biodiversity and ecosystem services, providing valuable inputs to CBD and IPBES processes. Case studies will be compiled through the UNU-IAS International Satoyama Initiative (ISI) project, producing an annual publication series titled the "Satoyama Initiative Thematic Review". Starting with the first issue in late 2015, the publication will be submitted to the CBD's Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) as a contribution to the knowledge available for CBD policymaking. The ISI project, which serves as the Secretariat of the 172-member International

Partnership for the Satoyama Initiative (IPSI), also participates in the IPBES Indigenous and Local Knowledge Task Force and provides it with data, including analysis of IPSI case studies. UNU-IAS will also conduct a meta-analysis of case studies collected by the IPBES catalogue assessment and IPSI to provide knowledge that will be cited by IPBES assessment reports.

The UNU-IAS Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) project will also provide rich resources for IPBES, including learning resources for its catalogue of policy support tools and methodologies, by engaging the ESD Regional Centres of Expertise (RCE) initiative and Promotion of Sustainability in Postgraduate Education and Research Network (ProSPER.Net). The ESD project will also facilitate implementation of capacity building for biodiversity and ecosystem services, through a pilot programme in partnership with the IPBES secretariat. ESD workshops in the Asia-Pacific, Africa and/or South America during 2016 will develop a training module on biodiversity and ecosystem services, focusing in particular on multi-stakeholder networking and educational/learning interventions.

C. Assisting Member States in Implementing Strategies

UNU-IAS, working closely with the CBD Secretariat, has also been exploring possibilities for assisting in the review process for National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) submitted by CBD member states. This would involve the ISI project helping to evaluate NBSAPs in terms of whether the landscape approach is adequately represented.

The institute will further promote the “Indicators of Resilience in Socio-ecological Production Landscapes and Seascapes” and “Toolkit” publication, which were produced by UNU-IAS in 2015, together with Bioversity International, UNDP and IGES. This will support local communities in implementing the CBD agenda, through which member states can specifically contribute to Aichi Target 18 (Respect for traditional knowledge and full participation of indigenous peoples and local communities) and analyze the results.

Both the IPSI Global Conference and the Satoyama Initiative Regional Workshop facilitate knowledge-sharing and collaboration among the parties to the CBD and other organizations. Under current plans the Sixth Global Conference of IPSI will be held in Siem Reap, Cambodia in 2016, and the next Regional Workshop in Cusco, Peru for the Latin American region.

The success of IPSI, including its Satoyama Development Mechanism (SDM) funding project, which provides seed funding for activities related to socio-ecological production landscapes and seascapes (SEPLS), led to the recent development of a major new initiative to be implemented by the ISI project, “Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management in Priority Socio-ecological Production Landscapes and Seascapes”, in collaboration with Conservation International Japan and the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES). This is expected to upscale the activities of IPSI and contribute to realizing CBD goals, providing GEF funding for selected projects in three target geographies that have been identified as biodiversity hotspots — the Tropical Andes; Indo-Burma; and Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands (see [section 5](#) for more details on this funding).

UNU-IAS has contributed to the UNESCO-SCBD Joint Programme on Linking Cultural and Biological Diversity and will help to coordinate its scientific component. Research by the UNU-IAS Operating Unit Ishikawa/Kanazawa (OUIK) on biocultural diversity will also contribute to efforts to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. OUIK will co-organize an international conference in October 2016 on biocultural diversity in Asia, in close collaboration with the CBD Secretariat, UNESCO and Ishikawa Prefectural Government (Japan). The conference aims to develop a framework for the interrelationship between local biodiversity and local culture in an Asian context, which will also inform policy development for more effective conservation and utilization. The outputs of this conference will be presented at CBD COP 13 in Mexico, scheduled for December 2016.

OUIK will contribute to the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme, in particular for the Mount Hakusan Biosphere Reserve. OUIK will play a key role in linking international and local stakeholders to promote the revision process for this site, including its newly extended transition zone.

UNU-IAS will provide technical advice and research assistance for applications to the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) initiative of FAO. Exchange and collaboration on GIAHS will also be promoted through the East Asia Research Association for Agricultural Heritage Systems, which UNU-IAS helped to establish in 2013.

2.3. Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction

Strategic Direction

UNU-IAS research will develop resilience strategies for adaptation to climate change, advance international cooperation on low carbon technology to support states' mitigation efforts under the UNFCCC framework, and produce recommendations for implementation of the Sendai Framework on DRR related to risk communication and technological hazards.

Action Plan

This strategic direction will be addressed through the following programmes, projects and activities:

A. Climate Change Adaptation

The UNU-IAS project Enhancing Resilience to Climate and Ecosystem Changes in Semi-Arid Africa (CECAR-Africa) aims to build an integrated resilience enhancement strategy as a model for semi-arid regions across Sub-Saharan Africa. It focuses on three thematic areas, namely: forecast and assessment of climate change impact on agro-ecosystems, risk assessment of extreme weather hazards and development of adaptive resource management methods, and capacity development for local communities and professionals using the assessment results derived from work on the first two themes.

During 2016 the project will focus on the integration of these research themes and their findings, and establishing an integrated strategy to enhance resilience. To initiate this process a matchmaking workshop was organized in Ghana in August 2015, to share research findings with potential end-users and partners, and to develop social implementation, including policy recommendations on how to build resilience issues into the national structures and education for young people. The project's research findings and local interventions from its first four years will be compiled in an academic book, to be published in 2016. To ensure the continuation of the research and capacity development activities that have been initiated by the project, a new research centre will be launched the University for Development Studies (UDS), a CECAR-Africa partner university in Tamale, Ghana.

The project is implemented in partnership with other leading climate and ecosystems research organizations in Ghana and Japan, including The University of Tokyo; Kyoto University; the University of Ghana; Ghana Meteorological Agency; UDS and the UNU Institute for Natural Resources in Africa (UNU-INRA).

B. Low Carbon Technology (LCT)

The LCT project aims to develop strategies for diffusion of low carbon technology to developing countries, by analysing the international strategies of developed nations for promoting such technology. It will identify mechanisms by which international partnership and cooperation can facilitate the promotion low-carbon technology in support of international agreements on climate change and sustainable development. The issue of technology transfer and local innovation is critical to several debates within the UN, most pertinently the UNFCCC process. Technology will also play an important role within the SDG process, with a new technology facilitation mechanism to be established in support of the SDGs.

In its first stage the project will analyse approaches, barriers and solutions to addressing low-carbon technology transfer. A series of in-depth workshops will be held in Europe and the U.S. in late 2015 and in 2016.

This project is part of a broader initiative exploring the effectiveness of low carbon technology transfer, with other partners including the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies and the Asian Institute of Technology.

C. Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

UNU-IAS will contribute to the implementation of the 2015 Sendai Framework for DRR through research on the human dimensions of disasters, both natural and technological. It applies a human security perspective and focuses on issues of risk communication and disaster recovery.

In addition to the Great East Japan Earthquake, tsunami and nuclear accident of March 2011, this research draws upon a range of other international cases (including Chernobyl and Three Mile Island). UNU-IAS has been actively engaged in the global DRR policy agenda, including the development of the Sendai framework, resulting in the inclusion of UNU-IAS policy recommendations on mental health in the final text adopted in Sendai.

This research will further contribute to international debates on resilience and DRR related to technological hazards. Scientific knowledge and international policy related to “natech” disasters such as the Fukushima nuclear accident (in which a natural hazard triggers a technological accident) remain less developed compared to other types of disasters. By analysing lessons from the Fukushima accident and other similar cases, UNU-IAS aims to contribute towards addressing this gap.

In particular, previous research in this area has highlighted the need to consider the social dimensions of radiation risks, as well as technical problems. Further research will explore what forms of communication and information delivery are more and less effective in dealing with these issues, and draw broader policy recommendations of relevance for technological and “na-tech” disasters.

Previous research on disaster-induced displacement and related socio-economic issues will be further developed with a specific focus on the transition from post-disaster response to longer-term recovery. The resulting policy recommendations will target the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in Istanbul (May 2016), which is expected to focus on such issues as a key topic.

3. POSTGRADUATE DEGREES AND TRAINING

Overview

The UNU-IAS postgraduate degree programmes aim to develop international leaders with the interdisciplinary understanding and skills to advance creative solutions to problems of sustainability. UNU-IAS offers an MSc in Sustainability and a PhD in Sustainability Science, in close collaboration with leading universities in Japan.

Exchange agreements have been signed with The University of Tokyo (UoT), International Christian University (ICU, Tokyo), Sophia University (Tokyo) and Yokohama National University, allowing the transfer of credits with these universities. UNU-IAS has also initiated a Joint Diploma Programme on Sustainability Science with the UoT Graduate School of Frontier Science.

In March 2015 UNU-IAS received accreditation by the National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE) of Japan, ensuring the quality of the degree programmes.

UNU-IAS also provides postdoctoral fellowships, and a range of innovative short courses for young scholars and policymakers. The institute's teaching and research activities are closely linked, with student engagement in research projects providing field experience and developing applied skills.

Strategic Direction

The UNU-IAS postgraduate degree programmes will strive to achieve the highest level of quality, through rigorous evaluation, and further development of joint teaching arrangements with leading universities. UNU-IAS will strengthen linkages between teaching and research activities, ensuring that they are mutually reinforcing.

Action Plan

Steps will be taken to build on the strengths of the programmes that were identified by the NIAD-UE evaluation process, and to follow up on its recommendations. The evaluation praised the programmes' credit exchange agreements for expanding study opportunities and enhancing educational research. It also commended the strong competition for admissions, and the high rate of admissions from developing countries.

The NIAD-UE recommended that opinions and ideas should be compiled from past degree recipients, employers, and other parties to systematically assess learning outcomes. In line with this recommendation, an alumni network will be established to support evaluation of the postgraduate programmes. The programmes will be reviewed by tracing the career development of alumni after their graduation, with feedback from alumni serving as a valuable resource for further developing the programmes. This initiative will also expand UNU-IAS research networks, and facilitate active interaction between current and former students, and the institute's research teams.

Partnerships with leading universities in Japan will continue to be further developed for credit exchange and joint diploma arrangements. These will provide expanded learning opportunities for UNU-IAS students and serve to enhance the quality of the postgraduate programmes.

Opportunities for students to directly engage in UNU-IAS research projects will be expanded, for example through research assistantships. Students have been encouraged to focus their theses on topics directly related to ongoing UNU-IAS research projects.

In order to further strengthen links between UNU-IAS research and teaching activities, a monthly seminar will be utilized to exchange information and plan research projects within the UNU-IAS Natural Capital and Biodiversity (NCB) research area. The seminars bring together team members and students to discuss how to integrate and coordinate activities and achieve strategic goals.

4. COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

Strategic Direction

The objective of UNU-IAS communications efforts will be to build the institute's brand as a leading institute on sustainability issues, strengthening the visibility of the institute and its activities in the international community and within Japan. A key priority will be ensuring the quality of UNU-IAS published work. Links with other stakeholders will also be strengthened, including universities and civil society organizations.

UNU-IAS communications efforts will emphasize the institute's comparative advantages, focusing on key messages such as the institute's global networks, and its unique ability to engage the academic, UN and policy communities.

Action Plan

UNU-IAS will continue to develop its websites, increasing traffic and raising visibility. More original content such as short articles and report summaries will be published, including more content in Japanese. By presenting research activities in a more accessible language and format, such as articles in the UNU web magazine *Our World*, the institute will reach a wider audience that may not be familiar with UNU-IAS, but has an interest in the issues and themes addressed by the institute. New website features will be introduced to direct traffic towards key sections of the websites (including research, news, events and publications).

Peer review processes will be applied to all significant UNU-IAS publications to ensure quality and factual accuracy. External peer reviews will be conducted for all publications in the UNU-IAS Policy Brief series, and internal peer reviews for several other publication series.

UNU-IAS will raise the profile of the institute, as well as UNU, within Japan through various media outlets, events, publications and social media activities. UNU-IAS will continue to organize events in the UNU CAFÉ discussion series, targeting university students and recent graduates interested in the United Nations. In addition, UNU-IAS will expand its outreach activities by engaging more actively with local media and hosting university and high school group visits. Events will be organized targeting the general public through the Global Environment Outreach Centre (GEOC). GEOC hosts events at UN-related conferences and on international observances of the United Nations, such as the International Day for Biological Diversity. GEOC events are frequently held in partnership with civil society organizations and receive significant media coverage in Japan. GEOC activities will be used to introduce UNU-IAS research and capacity development activities to the Japanese community.

Impact will be evaluated through monitoring of media coverage (*Meltwater News service*), publication citations and website traffic analysis, including more detailed data on publication downloads and audience profiling (*Google Analytics*). Other measures of success will include evidence of impact in UN reports, and anecdotal evidence of UNU-IAS research findings and policy recommendations gaining traction among target audiences.

5. FUNDING STRATEGY

UNU-IAS has relied mainly upon income provided by the Government of Japan (GOJ), with specific sources including the Ministry of the Environment (MOE); the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), and the Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA).

UNU-IAS will seek to diversify its funding sources. Indeed, the institute has been making efforts to secure financial contributions from international funders such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Belmont Forum.

Specific funding opportunities include the following:

- UNU-IAS will implement a GEF-funded project on Socio-Ecological Production Landscapes and Seascapes (SEPLS) in collaboration with Conservation International and the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES). The project was launched in September 2015. UNU-IAS will be responsible mainly for knowledge facilitation and capacity building as a part of the executive body of the project. It is expected that the GEF funding will contribute to the scaling up of the institute's current SEPLS-related projects, as well as diversifying and strengthening its funding base.
- In 2015, UNU-IAS successfully obtained two external research funds through the Belmont Forum's Collaborative Research Actions (CRA):
 - CRA 2014 - Scenarios of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services: "Biodiversity and Ecosystem Service Scenarios Network" (ScenNet) FY2015-2016.
 - CRA 2013 - Food Security and Land Use Change: "Food Security Impacts of Industrial Crop Expansion in Sub-Sahara Africa" (FICESSA) FY2015-FY2018.
(Press release URL) <http://www.jst.go.jp/inter/english/sicp/country/belmont-forum.html>
- UNU-IAS also launched feasibility research on building Asia-Pacific regional biodiversity scenarios funded by Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) to contribute to Future Earth.

6. MONITORING AND REVIEW

This Strategic Plan will be monitored and reviewed regularly.