



**UNITED NATIONS  
UNIVERSITY**

**UNU-IAS**

Institute for the Advanced Study  
of Sustainability

# **UNU-IAS Strategic Plan, 2016–2019**

Revised October 2018

## **Note on 2018 Revision**

This document presents the revised strategic plan for UNU-IAS during the period 2016–2019. The initial version of the plan, which covered the period 2016–2017, was adopted by the UNU-IAS Board in October 2015. The revised plan was adopted by the UNU-IAS Board at its meeting on 11 October 2018.

## **Overview**

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 plan for Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Equality in Section 5. Section 6 outlines how the implementation of the plan will be monitored.

# 1. OVERALL STRATEGIC DIRECTION

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. The institute will also strengthen its capacity for undertaking forward-looking research, that can identify future challenges and develop potential approaches for addressing them.

## 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:**  
UNU-IAS research and policy engagement will focus on implementation of the 2030 Agenda, with a particular focus on governance and institutional structures. It will contribute to discussions at the global level, including the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). The work of UNU-IAS will also support Member States in implementing effective multi-stakeholder partnerships, and advance the localisation process by which the global goals are translated into national and sub-national targets. Other key research areas will include the science–policy interface, interconnections between various SDGs and targets, and the role of water in achieving the SDGs.
- (ii) **Biodiversity and ecosystem services:**  
The work of UNU-IAS in this area will advance the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) agenda and global efforts to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets by 2020, while contributing to formulation of the global post-2020 Biodiversity Framework. UNU-IAS will play a leading role in developing and promoting approaches for landscape and seascape management, to advance the sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems. Work on scientific assessment and modelling of biodiversity and ecosystem services will support policymaking for their conservation and sustainable use, contributing to the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).
- (iii) **Climate change and disaster risk reduction (DRR):**  
UNU-IAS research will contribute to implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (mitigation and adaptation), the Sendai Framework for DRR, and related SDGs. The institute will explore interactions between social-ecological systems and resilience, by developing ecosystem-based approaches to DRR (“eco-DRR”) and climate change adaptation.

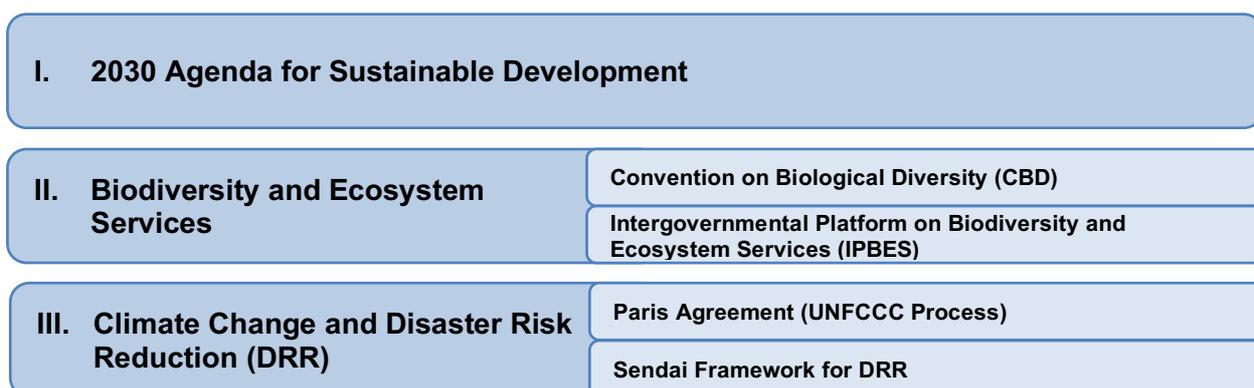


Figure 1: Targeted international policy agendas

## 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 through the institute’s strategic partnership with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The institute also aims to further develop platforms for education and knowledge generation at the national and regional levels across the globe. New policy research will advance efforts to achieve the SDGs through improving management of watershed environments in Asia, and by addressing synergies, tradeoffs, and solution prioritisation in Sub-Saharan Africa.

#### Implementation 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). Since their adoption in September 2015, various institutional frameworks and structures for implementation have been developed at the global, regional, national, and subnational levels. However, effective governance models are yet to be clearly addressed.

As the success of the 2030 Agenda 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 citizens 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 UNU-IAS Governance for Sustainable Development (GSD) project aims to address these issues and examine how the SDGs can effectively 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 comparative national and subnational case studies on institutional architectures and responses through policies to address the SDGs.

The research will pursue two main objectives. One is to fill these gaps by identifying effective institutional architectures and policy frameworks for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs at multiple levels. In doing so it will make full use of the comparative advantages of UNU-IAS as a think-tank within the UN system 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 follow-up and review and 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 countries for case studies have been identified, mainly in the Asia-Pacific region, including Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, and Myanmar. The GSD project will build on the strategic partnership between UNU-IAS and ESCAP, which was established with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in 2017. This collaboration resulted in the jointly published *Guidelines for Multi-stakeholder Partnerships to Implement the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific*, which were launched in March 2018 during the 5th Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, based on the outcome of a series of co-organized workshops. The GSD project is now working on the application of the guidelines in the context of Indonesia, in collaboration with ESCAP and the Ministry of National Development Planning (Bappenas) of the Government of Indonesia. The research will be carried out in collaboration with a wide range of partners including government agencies, ESCAP, and other UN offices, national and regional members of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), the Future Earth initiative, and other research institutions.

#### *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, comprising 166 RCEs around the world as of September 2018, is ideally positioned to translate global sustainable development policy and vision into local realities, using education and training to undertake 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 and ecosystem services, climate change, and disaster risk reduction. The ESD project will also support ProSPER.Net member universities to undertake several joint research projects each year, focusing on various sustainability issues such as (i) identifying approaches in cities in the Asia-Pacific for recycling plastics; (ii) establishing a working group on disaster resilience and sustainable development to integrate the sustainability agenda into postgraduate curriculums, and; (iii) developing a framework for local efforts towards achieving the SDGs.

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 policymakers, young professionals, and practitioners. For 2018–2019, the ESD project plans to organize a ProSPER.Net Young Researchers' School, a ProSPER.Net Leadership Programme, and several Capacity Building Workshops for RCEs focused on the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). The ESD project also delivers the ASEAN+3 Leadership Programme on Sustainable Production and Consumption annually to government officials, business leaders, and managers. 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 also works with other global sustainability networks and alliances to link local and regional initiatives to platforms and processes for global sustainable development and ESD. These include the GAP, IPBES and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, and the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI). The ESD project will also advance implementation of the 2030 Agenda 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 the Education for Sustainable Development in Africa (ESDA) project has been working to promote Africa's sustainable development through knowledge exchange by establishing and managing a collaborative research and teaching network between universities in Africa and Asia, together with research institutes. In the past five years the project has built a foundation and structure for training African professionals who will drive the continent's future sustainable development. This has been achieved through an inter-university collaborative programme of training and research, by eight African partner universities running three Masters-level degree programmes with support from Asian academic and research institutions. A key component of this programme has been the strengthening of teaching and research systems of African universities, particularly among young faculty, through partnerships in knowledge, creation, and sharing with Asian academic institutions.

In 2018 the ESDA project will enter a new phase, anchored by a youth entrepreneurship education and training initiative aimed at driving Africa's sustainable industrialization and implementing the 2030 Agenda. The three ESDA graduate-level programmes, which focus on mineral resources, sustainable urban development, and integrated rural development, will be expanded with the addition of critical component of sustainable industrialization. The expansion of ESDA to include capacity building for African youth entrepreneurs follows recommendations from the Africa Youth Entrepreneurship Forum, a side event of the 6<sup>th</sup> session of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI) in 2016. 15 leading postgraduate schools of business have committed to work collectively in partnership with the private sector to promote youth entrepreneurship for Africa's sustainable industrialization. This marks a new departure for ESDA, firstly in widening its reach — and ultimately, ensuring greater impact by expanding the initiative to Francophone countries in partnership with Anglophone countries in Africa. The deeper engagement it fosters through increased partnerships between higher education institutions and the private sector will contribute towards implementing the 2030 Agenda, particularly SDGs 4 (quality education); 5 (gender equality); 8 (decent work and economic growth); 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure); and 10 (reduced inequalities).

The Asia–Africa knowledge creation and exchange component of ESDA will play a critical role in this by facilitating regional and south–south dialogue between researchers and entrepreneurs through sharing of experiences and peer learning for policy innovation. ESDA will also be engaging these

business schools to establish a joint action program that can contribute to the “High 5s” initiative of the African Development Bank (AfDB) — “Industrialize Africa”, “Integrate Africa”, and “Improve the Quality of Life for the People of Africa” linked to the “Jobs for Youth in Africa” initiative.

The ESDA project aims to contribute to TICAD VII in Yokohama, Japan, in 2019. Given the broader goals of TICAD, mainstreaming youth entrepreneurship and sustainable industrialization will open opportunities for deep engagement with various stakeholders that will play important roles in implementing the initiative, particularly, tertiary education and private sector engagements in both Africa and Japan.

#### *D. Water for Sustainable Development (WSD)*

UNU-IAS will undertake interdisciplinary research to investigate the role of water in society, the economy, and the natural environment in the Asia-Pacific, aiming to advance sustainable development through improved management of watershed environments. The economies of many countries in the region are tied to watersheds, especially where agriculture, industries, or services linked to nature or historical landscapes are the main source of income. The interdependence between livelihoods and nature means that any change in quality, quantity, or movement of water has social, economic, and environmental consequences.

Building on previous UNU-IAS cross-sectoral policy research on water and urbanisation, the new Water for Sustainable Development (WSD) project will:

- (i) establish a framework to comprehensively evaluate the role of water in watershed areas in the region,
- (ii) develop methodologies to identify future scenarios to realize the water environment envisaged in the SDGs, factoring in the specific characteristics of each target area, and
- (iii) develop analytical tools and policy options related to the conservation of watershed environments, to advance sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific.

The WSD project will contribute to international policy processes, with research outcomes disseminated through publications and presentations, and shared with beneficiary countries through consultation workshops, capacity development training courses, and outreach events.

#### *E. Achieving the SDGs in Sub-Saharan Africa*

UNU-IAS will conduct policy research on the SDGs in Sub-Saharan Africa, focusing on goal 9 (industry, innovation, & infrastructure) and goal 11 (sustainable cities & communities). It will analyze synergies and trade-offs between relevant SDGs, and develop policy recommendations on international cooperation, investment, and solution prioritization. Following initial stakeholder workshops in Ghana, Malawi, and South Africa in August 2018, further workshops will be organized in January 2019 to disseminate research findings and recommendations in these countries. In addition to publishing peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, and policy briefs, UNU-IAS and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) will organize a side event on this topic at TICAD VII in August 2019.

## 2.2. Biodiversity & 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 and policy support for IPBES, and advance efforts to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets of CBD, as well as relevant SDGs such as goals 13 (climate action), 14 (life below water), and 15 (life on land).

### Implementation 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 and policy briefs. The research will explore plausible future developments of human society and the consequences of these developments for biodiversity and nature's contributions to people. 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. The institute is also part of the authoring team for IPBES global and regional assessments, and supports the capacity building activities of IPBES.

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 in 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 April 2019 UNU-IAS will organise a training workshop on nature scenarios and models for young researchers and postgraduate students in Switzerland, building on a co-hosted summer school held in June 2018. UNU-IAS will also develop online materials and a database for training programmes on scenarios and modelling to support capacity building for multiple end-users.

In 2019 UNU-IAS will co-organize a multi-stakeholder workshop on the science-policy interface for synergizing climate scenarios (IPCC) and ecosystem scenarios (IPBES), together with the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES). The outcomes of the workshop will be important scientific inputs for both IPCC and IPBES, as well as policy-relevant inputs for 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 has been shared at numerous CBD meetings as a contribution to the knowledge available for CBD policymaking. The ISI project, which serves as the Secretariat of the 230-member International Partnership for the Satoyama Initiative (IPSI), also participated in the

IPBES Indigenous and Local Knowledge Task Force and continues to contribute to its mandate, in particular through analysis of IPSI case studies.

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 has been facilitating implementation of capacity building for biodiversity and ecosystem services, through a pilot programme in partnership with the IPBES secretariat. The project has also been organising IPBES capacity development workshops in the Asia-Pacific and Africa to 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*

Joint research by UNU-IAS and the University of Tokyo has been analysing the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) submitted by CBD member states. A new phase of this research, starting in 2018, focuses on mainstreaming integrated approaches of production landscapes and seascapes into NBSAPs, and will be completed by 2020.

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. In addition to the resilience toolkit, additional tools will be developed to facilitate future visioning and planning of local communities, for the Aichi targets and also for the SDGs.

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 Eighth Global Conference of IPSI will be held in Kumamoto, Japan, in late 2019.

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 IGES. This project is scaling up the activities of IPSI and contributing 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.

UNU-IAS has contributed to the UNESCO-SCBD Joint Programme on Linking Cultural and Biological Diversity and plans to be closely involved in its follow-up initiative, a proposed “Nature-Culture Alliance”, to be led by the CBD Secretariat. 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 co-organized an international conference in October 2016 on biocultural diversity in Asia, in close collaboration with the CBD Secretariat, UNESCO and Ishikawa Prefectural Government (Japan). Based on the outcomes of the conference, OUIK will continue 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.

OUIK will also play a leading role in local efforts towards implementing the SDGs, and enhance collaboration with Suzu city and Kanazawa city to develop their SDGs strategy and international cooperation, as well as installation of an “SDGs lab”.

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 and policy engagement will focus on building and strengthening resilience to disasters and climate change, within the context of sustainable development. It aims to deepen the conceptualization of resilience, vulnerability, adaptation, and transformation, and identify the impacts of disasters and climate change on key development sectors and at different geographical scales. This will contribute to implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the 2030 Agenda, with a focus on identifying synergies and enhancing coherence between these three agendas.

### Implementation Plan

#### *A. Global Change and Resilience*

This strategic direction will be pursued through the UNU-IAS Global Change and Resilience (GCR) programme, focusing on Asia and the Pacific as the most vulnerable global region to disasters and climate change. In particular, research will address climate fragility, human security and climate change, disaster governance in ASEAN countries, and coherence between the 2030 Agenda, the Sendai Framework and Paris Agreement. Research outcomes will be published through articles in peer-reviewed academic journals and a series of policy briefs targeting these agendas.

UNU-IAS will work closely with the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), including as part of a preparation committee for the 2019 Global Platform for DRR, and as a member of the Scientific and Technical Partnership for the implementation of the Sendai Framework. Outreach activities such as public events on International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction will increase public awareness of disasters and climate change, and help to build community resilience in local communities.

The institute will also contribute to the Future Earth initiative through its Knowledge-Action Network (KAN) on Emergent Risks and Extreme Events, to develop interdisciplinary research on systemic risk, including the interaction of climate-change induced extreme events and other disasters.

Collaboration with UNFCCC will include supporting its Adaptation Committee and Nairobi Work Programme, and continuing to contribute to COP meetings through active participation and side events. Further engagement with UNFCCC will be developed, with a focus on accelerating development of climate adaptation and mitigation strategies in Asia. The institute will also provide expert inputs for reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), including its Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), as well as the Global Environmental Outlook 6 report developed by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).

A joint initiative with the institute's Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) project and the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) will examine how universities in Asia address DRR and the SDGs in their curriculums.

*B. Scientific Knowledge Generation for Ecosystem-based Disaster Risk Reduction (Eco-DRR)*

The occurrence of natural disasters has been increasing — partly due to contemporary climate change — and adaptation to disaster risks is critical for local communities. At the same time, many communities in Japan and other developed countries are experiencing depopulation. Ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction (Eco-DRR) takes advantage of the multi-functionality of ecosystems, including their capacity to mitigate disasters while providing multiple ecosystem services. In collaboration with the Research Institute for Humanity and Nature (RIHN) and the University of Tokyo, UNU-IAS will develop practical nature-based solutions for implementation of Eco-DRR in local communities by visualizing natural disaster risks, evaluating the multi-functionality of Eco-DRR, conducting scenario analysis, co-delivering trial implementation in local communities, and collaborating with the insurance sector.

### 3. POSTGRADUATE DEGREES & TRAINING

#### Background

UNU-IAS offers an MSc in Sustainability and a PhD in Sustainability Science, as well as a range of short courses, in close collaboration with leading universities in Japan. 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. The institute's teaching and research activities are closely linked, with student engagement in research projects providing field experience and developing applied skills.

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

In addition to these partnerships for credit exchange and joint diplomas, UNU-IAS has joined the Sustainability Science Consortium (SSC), through which several participating universities jointly deliver the course "Frontiers of Sustainability Science" using videoconferencing.

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 and securing eligibility for UNU-IAS students to receive JICA scholarships.

**GOAL:** Develop international leaders with the interdisciplinary understanding and skills to advance creative solutions for sustainable development

#### Strategic Direction

The UNU-IAS postgraduate degree programmes will strive to achieve the highest level of quality, through further development of joint teaching arrangements with leading universities, as well as rigorous evaluation. The number of annual admissions will be maintained at the current level, targeting the critical mass of students needed to ensure the future sustainability of the programmes.

Further development of the programmes will focus on enhancing their added value. The active engagement of students in UNU-IAS research projects will be expanded, with this integration ensuring that the degree programmes draw on and strengthen the institute's research. UNU-IAS will promote and highlight the contributions of its students to policymaking in the international community and in their own countries.

#### Implementation Plan

Efforts will focus on securing the number of recipients of existing scholarships, as well as establishing new scholarships to support students from developing countries. Outreach activities will be expanded to increase the number of strong applicants, and ensure a high level of competition in the admissions process. These efforts will seek to attract well-qualified students who are able to fund their own studies, as well as those applying for scholarships.

UNU-IAS will further develop partnerships with leading universities in Japan for joint teaching, credit exchange, joint diplomas, and double degree arrangements. These will provide expanded learning opportunities for UNU-IAS students and serve to enhance the quality of the institute's postgraduate programmes. Distance learning programmes will be enhanced in cooperation with SSC members and other institutions both within and beyond Japan.

Alumni relations will be strengthened to monitor learning outcomes and career development, while obtaining feedback to improve the degree programmes. The network of UNU-IAS alumni will be

engaged to provide current students with opportunities to understand real-world cases in their studies, and learn about future career paths. This initiative will facilitate active interaction between current and former students, such as by current students taking internships at institutions where alumni work, thus expanding UNU-IAS research networks.

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, since 2016 a Sustainability Science Research Seminar (SSRS) has been organized several times each month to discuss the progress of research projects and student thesis work. SSRS will continue to bring together UNU-IAS researchers and students to explore how to integrate and coordinate their activities in line with the overall goals of the institute.

## 4. COMMUNICATIONS & OUTREACH

### Strategic Direction

The institute's communications strategy will be closely aligned with the UNU Global Communications Strategy 2018–2019\* — which itself reflects the core goals, priorities, and institutional context of UNU-IAS, having been formulated through an inclusive process that engaged UNU-IAS as part of the global network of UNU communicators. The overarching goal of UNU communications is as follows:

**GOAL:** To shape, package, and deliver UNU's products and expertise to maximise impact, effect positive change, and drive further demand for UNU's work.

— *UNU Global Communications Strategy 2018–2019\**

UNU-IAS will pursue this goal, while seeking to build the institute's brand as a leading institute on sustainability issues, by strengthening the visibility of the institute and its activities in the international community and within Japan. UNU-IAS communications and outreach efforts will emphasize the institute's comparative advantages, through two core messages:

#### **UNU-IAS Core Messages:**

- *UNU-IAS produces innovative, policy-oriented research that advances global efforts to achieve the SDGs*
- *UNU-IAS postgraduate degrees produce the policymakers of tomorrow, who will be at the forefront of global efforts towards a more sustainable future*

### Implementation Plan

UNU-IAS will contribute to each of the strategic objectives of the UNU Global Communications Strategy, through activities tailored to the institute's specific context and priorities. Every year UNU-IAS will prepare an annual work plan outlining how it will contribute to each objective, which will be submitted to the UNU Office of Communications (OC).

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\* Available at: <https://unu.edu/about/unu-services/media-communications#overview>

## 5. GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND GENDER EQUALITY

**GOAL:** Promote gender mainstreaming and improve gender equality in all activities

### Strategic Direction

UNU-IAS is committed to gender equality. The institute will continue to make progress in implementing the UNU Policy on Gender Equality and the UNU Action Plan on Gender Equality, which target achieving gender parity across UNU by 2021 and mainstreaming gender throughout UNU's research, teaching, capacity development, and other activities.

Gender equality has been included by the UNU-IAS advisory Board as one of the six themes on which the institute's performance is evaluated, through the UNU-IAS Performance Monitoring Framework. UNU-IAS will seek to better incorporate gender perspectives in its research activities, reflecting gender issues in project design, implementation, and evaluation. Mainstreaming will also be pursued in teaching activities, through increased inclusion of gender perspectives in teaching curriculums and in student research. The institute will continue to build a more diverse and equitable workforce, and improve gender sensitivity in the institute's work environment,

### Implementation Plan

In implementing the UNU Action Plan on Gender Equality, UNU-IAS will prioritise achieving progress on the following items:

- Develop gender-related indicators for research and staffing (item 4.2)
- Mainstream gender concerns in research (item 4.3)
- Achieve gender parity on panels, conferences, and events (items 4.4 and 4.5)
- Recruit more women for senior positions (item 5.1)
- Ensure participation of both men and women in hiring processes (items 5.2 and 5.3)

## 6. MONITORING AND REVIEW

Progress on implementing this strategic plan will be monitored by the UNU-IAS advisory Board, as part of the UNU-IAS Performance Monitoring Framework. The framework was adopted by the Board in December 2016. It comprises detailed objectives and performance indicators grouped under the following six themes:

1. Mandate & Strategic Direction
2. Fundraising
3. Quality Assurance
4. Policy Impact
5. Service to the UN System
6. Gender Mainstreaming