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United Nations University Opens New Institute in Dresden

UNU-FLORES will focus on the nexus between water, soil and waste management

Dresden, 10 December 2012 — Today the United Nations University (UNU) officially opened its Institute for Integrated Management of Material Fluxes and of Resources (UNU-FLORES) in Dresden, Germany.

The mission of UNU-FLORES is to contribute — through research, teaching, advanced training, capacity development and dissemination of knowledge — to the resolution of pressing challenges in the area of sustainable use and integrated management of water, soil and waste as environmental resources. The focus is on developing and transitional countries. In line with the overarching mission of UNU to foster sustainable development, UNU-FLORES will undertake this work within the context of global change and concentrate on resource management and its nexus to a green economy. UNU-FLORES will foster target- and region-specific knowledge creation and transfer, as well as offer postgraduate and professional education.

UNU-FLORES is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Free State of Saxony of Germany, with each party contributing one million Euros per year.

“Dresden is one of the top addresses in terms of research, development and teaching. Its Technical University was the first Eastern German university to be awarded as part of the German federal excellence initiative. Now the United Nations University is establishing its first institute in the eastern part of Germany in Dresden. This is an honour for the region and will create enormous visibility far beyond its borders. UNU has representations in 13 countries all over the world and is a crucial instrument for international research cooperation”, says Germany’s Federal Minister for Research and Education, Prof. Annette Schavan.

“UNU-FLORES is an important interface between science and politics, since it contributes to solutions for global challenges”, says Saxony’s Minister for Science, Prof. Sabine von Schorlemer. “We have to foster the search for answers as a central aspect of scientific research not only within the government of Saxony; we are obliged to conduct this search in an international context. And we understand that we need a joint approach to master global challenges and their complexity.”

Research topics of UNU-FLORES will focus on systems and flux analysis, global change assessment, water management, soil and land-use management, waste management and contaminated sites. UNU-FLORES aims at an integrative and global perspective on resources management, considering interrelated resources (such as water and soil) in a comprehensive manner. A core scientific task will be to replace traditional input-output models with a linked-cycle management approach.

“The topics of UNU-FLORES are at the heart of UNU’s broad theme of sustainability, and will strengthen and complement the capacities and expertise already available within the global UNU system”, says Prof. Dr. Konrad Osterwalder, UNU Rector. “We are happy to open a new UNU institute in the eastern part of Germany and are looking forward to a close cooperation with Technical University Dresden.”

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The founding Director of UNU-FLORES is Prof. Dr. Reza Ardakanian of Iran, who has served as Director of the UN-Water Decade Programme on Capacity Development since 2007 and as Vice-Rector of UNU in Europe, ad interim (2009–2011). Dr. Ardakanian holds a PhD in Water Resources Management from McMaster University (Canada) and is a faculty member of Sharif University of Technology in Tehran, Iran. He formerly held a number of national offices in Iran, including Deputy Minister for Water Affairs (2001–2005), Senior Vice-Minister (1998–2001) and Deputy Minister for Planning & Economic Affairs (1989–1991) with the Ministry of Energy, and Deputy Minister for Urban Development and Municipalities with the Ministry of Interior (1987–1989).

“The nexus idea has recently gained much recognition worldwide, and UNU-FLORES aims at acting at the forefront of initiatives promoting a nexus approach to the sustainable management of environmental resources such as water, soil and waste. The establishment of UNU-FLORES can be seen as a direct response to the nexus initiative”, emphasizes Prof. Ardakanian.

UNU-FLORES is located in the Dresden World Trade Centre, close to the historic city centre. The institute will collaborate closely — in both research and training — with the faculty of Environmental Sciences of Technical University Dresden as well as with other research institutes and universities.

It is planned that a twinning partner of UNU-FLORES will be established in Maputo, Mozambique. Twinning of institutes is the UNU approach for strengthening global outreach and capacity building. The new concept, to be realized over the next decade, calls for all UNU institutes to become “twin institutes” — meaning that each institute will have at least two campuses, one of them located in the developed and the other one in the developing parts of the world.

UNU-FLORES is part of the United Nations University (UNU) system. UNU was founded some 37 years ago as the academic arm of the United Nations. Its mandate is to support the United Nations and its Member States through research, postgraduate education and capacity building and to serve as a think tank for the United Nations system. UNU is a global university, with its headquarters in Tokyo, Japan, and 15 institutes located throughout the world. The focus of UNU’s work is on pressing global problems that are of concern to the UN rather than along the lines of traditional academic disciplines.

For more information about the UNU Institute for Integrated Management of Material Fluxes and of Resources, or to request an interview with UNU-FLORES Director Ardakanian, please contact Mirjam Kaplow, Head of Communications, United Nations University (kaplow@unu.edu, phone +1 (212) 963-6346); mobile +1 (917) 951-5287).

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