I. Context

In 2018, the United Nations University (UNU) will enter its 44th year of operations as a global research network, a United Nations think tank, and a postgraduate training and capacity development organisation.

As outlined in its 2015-2019 Strategic Plan, UNU's mission is to "contribute, through collaborative research and education, dissemination, and advisory services, to efforts to resolve the pressing global problems of human survival, development and welfare..."

To achieve this, UNU:
- generates research to raise awareness on pressing global issues and to effect positive change in policies and perspectives
- informs policy both within the UN system and more broadly at international, regional, national, and local levels
- helps developing countries build capacity for research and education
- supports academic communities worldwide to advance evidence-based knowledge
- provides specialised postgraduate-level training with interdisciplinary curriculums

The role of communications is vital to UNU's success in these efforts. In this digital era, information has never been more accessible, but the cacophony of messages makes it difficult to be heard. To overcome this, UNU communications shapes UNU products/expertise – at the conceptual stage – to maximise relevance to target publics, packages it to ensure consumable and compelling content, and delivers it – to the right people, at the right time, through the right channels – to cut through the noise.

UNU’s Global Communications Strategy 2018-2019 recognises the key role of communications in realising UNU’s mission. It will contribute to the organisation’s success by aligning UNU’s global communications resources towards achievement of the same goal and, in doing so, make UNU greater than the sum of its parts.

II. Goals and Objectives

Based on a review of UNU's Strategic Plan 2015–2019, and a comprehensive situation analysis (evaluating strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats), UNU communications will support UNU’s mission by focusing efforts on the following overarching 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.

To achieve this overarching goal, UNU communications will focus on four objectives in the 2018–2019 biennium.

Objective #1: Communicate the value, relevance, and impact of UNU’s work.

To ensure that UNU’s products and expertise matter to key publics, UNU communicators will undertake innovative measures to communicate their value, relevance, and impact. Communications will connect the organisation’s work to real people, and highlight UNU’s unique value proposition, i.e., what it offers that no other source can.

Sample activities:
- Produce and promote a short-format video series highlighting UNU’s work.
- Develop UNU infographics series to visually capture UNU’s research findings.
- Expand the UNU Sustainable Development Explorer campaign, enabling UNU’s publics to easily explore the “who” and “what” of UNU through the lens of the SDGs.
Objective #2: Bolster UNU’s stakeholder networks.

Communications efforts are most effective when they reach the right publics, at the right times, to inspire a desired action. To achieve more communications success, UNU must expand and refine its networks. In 2018–2019, UNU communications will reach new publics and increase engagement with existing publics.

Sample activities:
- Establish and maintain relationships with influencers (individuals and organisations) to amplify UNU reach and impact.
- Launch a student ambassador programme to involve UNU’s students and alumni in the broader communications effort.
- Build targeted contact lists based on interest, and channel relevant UNU content to interested publics.

Objective #3: Achieve communications wins in local and international media.

More than 60 per cent of the world’s policymakers get their briefings from top-tier media. Injecting UNU expertise into ongoing debates and issues in the media can cement UNU’s profile as a thought-leader on timely, important topics. In 2018–2019, the content and articles that UNU generates for its various websites and blogs will be tailored for placement in traditional media outlets where appropriate, to then be echoed and multiplied on UNU-owned websites.

Sample activities:
- Write and place (in local and international media) op-eds by UNU experts.
- Conduct training workshops for journalists, and create a UNU-wide journalist network based on participants.
- Implement media relations campaigns to promote key work, using best-practice media relations methods.

Objective #4: Refresh UNU’s brand and online presence.

A brand is a representation of the substance of an organisation; it is about inspiring trust. To achieve its mission, UNU needs the trust of its publics. As such, it needs a brand identity that reflects UNU’s values, personality, and unique value proposition. In conjunction with the development of the next UNU Strategic Plan, UNU communications will further develop UNU’s brand identity to inspire trust among its publics.

Websites are the ultimate channel for brand expression, and one of the UNU’s most vital communications channels. UNU communications will improve UNU’s online presence, enabling target publics to more easily understand who UNU is, what it does, and why it matters.

Sample activities:
- Conduct system-wide branding discussions to solidify UNU’s brand (position, value proposition, personality, vision, tag line, etc.).
- Update the main UNU website (unu.edu) and institute websites on the same platform.
- Update Our World, UNU’s science blog (ourworld.unu.edu).

III. Target Publics

While target publics vary across institutes and campaigns, they can be generally segmented into three groups: Consumers – people who receive the products or services of UNU (UN system, academics, policymakers, donors, governments, students, informed public); Enablers – people who help make UNU successful (media, influencers, partners, academic organisations, donors); and Producers – people who provide input to UNU (personnel, Council members, Board/Advisory Committee members, consultants, affiliated researchers, doctoral fellows, interns).

UNU will continue to communicate with its core publics – including Member States and policy makers – but will expand in the 2018-2019 biennium to also target the following three publics:

The UN system: The UN system has always been, and will remain, an important target public for UNU. UNU communications will place an increased emphasis on this public in 2018-2019, given
UNU's re-doubled focus on producing UN policy-relevant research, and its expanded presence in New York with the relocation of the UNU Centre for Policy Research.

**Advocates:** To effect policy, it is important to focus efforts on change makers outside government who can motivate change at the local/grassroots level. NGOs, activist groups, and other organisations need data and research as proof points for their campaigns. UNU communications will target these groups to help promote change from the grassroots level.

**Influencers:** While UNU’s communication resources are limited, the appeal of its products is not. An article, email, phone call, or tweet by an influential person promoting UNU’s work can exponentially drive action towards a desired result. UNU communications will focus on engaging appropriate influencers, using their networks to achieve more impact.

### IV. Messaging

Effective messaging guides publics through the influence process: first, by creating awareness about a specific issue, then by gaining acceptance of the importance of the issue, and finally by spurring action.

To reach the right public(s) and drive the desired result, UNU must have clear, consistent, and actionable messages tailored to each public. Based on the goal and objectives outlined in this strategy, UNU’s communications messaging will:

- Clearly communicate the value, quality and impact of UNU’s work
- Emphasise UNU’s unique value proposition
- Demonstrate the relevance of UNU’s work as it relates to each specific public
- Highlight the human side of UNU’s work
- Use clear language to simplify complex issues
- Be professional, but avoid technical jargon
- Use words that create interest and spur engagement
- Have a clear call to action driving the public to complete a desired action
- Be inclusive, using “we”, “you”, and “us” to engage publics in a personal conversation
- Reflect gender balance and use gender-sensitive language

### V. Implementation

This strategy provides the overarching framework that will align communications work across the UNU system over the next biennium. Each institute, including the Office of Communications in Tokyo, is responsible for creating its own annual work programme to elaborate how they will contribute to the identified objectives.

To guide the creation of these work plans, the Office of Communications created an implementation plan, in close consultations with institutes. The plan elaborates the analysis guiding the strategy, offers examples of tactics that institutes could employ to support the objectives, provides detailed guidance on UNU messaging, and outlines expected results, timelines, and measurement requirements.

To support strategy implementation, UNU communications will also focus on four internal foundation elements:

- First, to **strengthen cross-institute communications efforts** to ensure consistent internal collaboration throughout 2018–2019. Second, to **improve UNU’s internal communications capacity** by developing a staff training programme to facilitate communications on-boarding for new and current UNU staff (from researchers to directors). Third, to **embed the role of communications in UNU’s strategic functions**, ensuring it is considered at the beginning of all projects and initiatives and not tacked-on at the end. Fourth and finally, to **improve UNU’s ability to measure, and report on, the impacts of its communications efforts** by establishing a process to monitor, collect, and benchmark UNU-wide communication metrics.
VI. Monitoring and Evaluation

The success of any strategy depends on sound monitoring and measurement practices. In addition to output-related metrics collected for each objective, the Office of Communications will gather the following overarching metrics from institutes, collate and assimilate the data, and report biannually to the UNU Council.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric Type</th>
<th>Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Overall Reach       | **Online:**
|                     | • Online media coverage/impressions                                                  |
|                     | • Social media impressions                                                            |
|                     | • Visits to UNU websites (collective), including Our World                           |
|                     | • Visits to UNU Collections                                                           |
|                     | **Offline:**
|                     | • Number of people reached through events                                             |
|                     | • Media coverage/impressions (radio, print, TV)                                       |
|                     | • Number of UNU expert op-eds published                                               |
| Overall Engagement  | **Online:**
|                     | • Social media engagement (mentions, shares)                                          |
|                     | • Social media followership                                                            |
|                     | • # of key influencers engaged with UNU                                               |
|                     | • Returning visitors to UNU websites                                                  |
|                     | • Publication downloads                                                               |
| Overall Policy Uptake| • Qualitative: policy uptake narratives                                               |
| Overall Brand Awareness| • Website user survey                                                                 |
|                     | • General stakeholder survey                                                           |

VII. Conclusion

The UNU Global Communications Strategy 2018-2019 aims to overcome UNU’s (internal and external) communications challenges, realise the maximum benefit of its combined communications resources, and assist the organisation in achieving its mission.

The creation and ultimate implementation of this strategy would not be possible without the active participation of – and feedback from – the UNU Rector’s Office, institute Directors, and communication focal points at UNU institutes, programmes, and working groups.

About United Nations University

For the past four decades, UNU has been a go-to think tank for impartial research on the pressing global problems of human survival, development, and welfare. With more than 400 researchers in 13 countries, UNU’s work spans the full breadth of the 17 SDGs, generating knowledge to inform policy and effect positive global change. For more information, visit [www.unu.edu](http://www.unu.edu).