

**First RCE Thematic Conference: Towards Achieving the SDGs
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Institute for the Advanced Study
of Sustainability

**Plenary III: Orientation to UN Platforms on Biodiversity,
Climate Change, & Sustainable Consumption and Production
(including Q & A)
6 December, 2017, Okayama, Japan**

Moderator: Prof. Mario Tabucanon (UNU-IAS)

Overview of RCE Activities

Presenters:

- **Dr. Unnikrishnan Payyappallimana (UNU-IAS)**
- **Dr. Philip Vaughter (UNU-IAS)**
- **Dr. Zinaida Fadeeva (Advisor on Sustainable Consumption and Production to the First RCE Thematic Conference)**

Orientation to UN Platforms on Biodiversity, Climate Change, & Sustainable Consumption and Production

Presenters:

- **Dr. Clarissa C. Arida, Director, Programme Development & Implementation, ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity**
- **Dr. Claire Brown, Senior Program Officer, Ecosystem Assessment, United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC)**
- **Dr. Emmanuel Tachie-Obeng, Principal Programme Officer, Ghana Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Focal Point for Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE)**
- **Ms. Cristina Rekasavas, Training Associate, Green Development and Climate Change, United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)**
- **Dr. Lewis Akenji, Programme Director, Sustainable Consumption and Production, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES)**
- **Dr. Arab Hoballah, Team Leader, SWITCH - Asia SCP Facility * via video message**

Prof. Mario Tabucanon opened the Plenary Session III and welcomed everyone to the session on UN Platforms on Biodiversity, Climate Change and Sustainable Consumption and Production before beginning his opening remarks:

“We are all guided by a singular objective, to find areas of synergy and intersection between RCE (Regional Centres of Expertise on ESD) communities and the international platforms. How can RCE actions contribute to the agenda that we are having through the UN agencies and other international organisations? This is the principle question this

session is going to address. What are the RCEs doing as they contribute to SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) implementation? What are the RCE processes and methodologies within multi-stakeholder partnerships? How can RCE actions be aligned through these international platforms and processes? Those are the issues we would like to address. This session is divided into three segments; the first is an overview of RCE activities on the three themes, the second is presentations on these three platforms relevant to the RCEs and third, if time permits, discussion with the audience. For the first session, I would like to call upon three panellists from the UNU-IAS Global Service Centre for an overview of the RCE activities.”

Dr. Unnikrishnan Payyappallimana shared an overview on biodiversity and traditional knowledge, presenting the ESD Programme Strategic Framework and explaining how they are well aligned with the three focus areas of UNU-IAS such as; Global Change & Resilience, Natural Capital & Biodiversity and Sustainable Societies, the latter of which the ESD (Education for Sustainable Development) Programme belongs. Nearly 70% of RCEs are working in this area, as seen through a number of publications, news items, RCE Bulletins and represented in submissions for the RCE Awards. In Asia-Pacific, around 45 out of the 58 RCEs in the region are linked to the biodiversity thematic area. Dr. Payyappallimana acknowledged there is plenty of work being done in this area, however as reporting is at a minimum, he called for more case studies around this theme. Areas of engagement with RCEs were also addressed, including capacity building programs and the integration of Indigenous and local knowledge.

Dr. Philip Vaughter spoke about Climate Change Education, noting its rebranding to ACE (Action for Climate Empowerment), which lays out where education is going to play its role in public awareness, education and training. He noted that public awareness is key and is an area where RCEs can play a strong role as they are adept at engaging the community, bringing them on board and creating dialogue. Dr. Vaughter spoke about the Doha Work Programme, in which governments are asked to select key players to identify synergies with the international community and coordinate with on strategies around climate change – another area the RCE community can be involved in. The ACE Focal Points map was also covered, with a call for RCEs to start taking stock of where these agencies are being housed and how active they are. Areas where there are no focal points are a chance for those RCEs to step up and provide pointers. Also worth considering are whether education departments or educators are involved. A look at a map of reports received from RCEs was also presented, with a reminder to submit reporting to provide further details on all of the work which is being done globally. Dr. Vaughter urged RCEs to tell their stories, get involved in climate change education through Action for Climate Empowerment, and face the challenge of having to talk to national government ministries to raise visibility.

Dr. Zinaida Fadeeva spoke about sustainable consumption and production (SCP), referring to the common challenges of population, resource depletion and climate change.

Looking at the SDGs and the ranking of countries according to their performance, Dr. Fadeeva noted the relation between the HDI and ecological footprint across countries. Countries ranked highly in human development often display the highest ecological footprint, a point she noted is perhaps the biggest challenge to SCP. This results in a need to break dependencies on resource consumption, economic activity and human well-being. Dr. Fadeeva then spoke about the two major objectives of GAP: the transformation of the education sector, and the transformation of development, both of which are linked to the three SCP focal areas of the conference (focusing on education for transformation, developing educational materials and accelerating local SCP solutions). She then highlighted how RCEs in various contexts are modelling new practices through education, the range RCEs work in in the SCP area and the contribution to international capacity development activities such as the ASEAN+3 Leadership Programme and international events.

Prof. Mario Tabucanon summed up the session, noting that RCEs are carrying out a wide range of activities, including those of the case studies presented, engaging in learning exchanges, being involved in policy processes, contributing to international platforms like IPBES, Action for Climate Empowerment and the SCP 10YFP. Continuing challenges include the need for RCEs to engage with national governments. Prof. Tabucanon reiterated the request for RCEs to send in their stories so that they can be shared with others. The first part of the session was then closed, and guests for the second part of the session were invited to the stage, with two speakers to present for each theme, providing a regional and a world view.

Dr. Clarissa C Arida spoke about biodiversity on a regional level, specifically within ASEAN, noting that the numerous challenges in addressing biodiversity concerns within the region are being addressed via 10 priority areas of the ASEAN Environmental Cooperation, which seeks to tackle SDG goals 13, 14, and 15. Dr. Arida also touched upon the recently launched ASEAN Biodiversity Outlook 2, which covers assessments in progress in achieving the targets, as well as responses as a region. These include key actions and how to move forward beyond 2020. Other key programs and initiatives being worked on include ASEAN Heritage Parks, the ASEAN Clearing House Mechanism database, and grant support for national parks in Vietnam, Myanmar and Indonesia especially through the Japan ASEAN Fund.

Dr. Claire Brown provided an introduction to IPBES, an intergovernmental body, formed in response to requests from governments which is focused on producing evidence that governments and various policy makers can use, providing options for resources based on the best-available science. IPBES looks at how the environment can be managed for long-term, human well-being worldwide. She explained that what IPCC does for climate change, IPBES is hoping to do for biodiversity. The work of IPBES includes expert assessments, policy support, building capacity and knowledge, communications and outreach.

Opportunities are always arising to get involved, including contributing as a nominated editor, author, reviewer, contributing case studies and expertise, or assisting to support capacity and knowledge-building.

Dr. Emmanuel Tachie-Obeng provided a regional view in terms of climate change, focusing on Ghana and the impact of climate change on the country. From 2012-2017, Ghana committed a national focal point. In order to implement plans and strategies successfully, sectoral working groups were formed to link up to the community, starting with sectors of the National Government, with Dr. Tachie-Obeng noting the importance of establishing this early on in the program to provide a higher likelihood of success. He then provided an overview of the innovative education and training activities they have conducted over the years, including drawing contests (children asked to draw what they see as climate change's impacts), holding a Climate Change Week (showing the community how climate change has affected the country), holding a symposium (bringing together students, volunteers and sector expertise across the country), holding Country Exchange Workshops (inviting countries to share experiences), creating posters, radio discussions and jingles to educate the masses, and building capacity for community leaders and chiefs to enable the implementation of learnings in their own dialects. They have also engaged in political dialogue (2016 elections) with parliament inviting them to educate them on climate change actions. Work has also been done on integrating climate change into the school curriculum, with a roadmap presented to national stakeholders, however the major challenges they are up against include funding and technical support.

Ms. Cristina Rekakavas provided an overview of UNITAR, the principal training arm of the UN, working in every region of the world. UNITAR believes it is crucial to invest in people's skills in learning on climate change, in turn providing them with the skills and knowledge to deal with an uncertain future. Ms. Rekakavas explained that UNITAR takes a systematic approach to climate change learning. She also ran through an overview of their portfolio, including the training programs and workshops they run and explained that they also focus on the impact of their training and conduct surveys and interviews for evaluations. Successes and results were highlighted, including the fact they have engaged with over 1,000 youth across the world and have recently trained government officials in Africa. Going forward, they hope to continue developing partnerships from global and local levels to join forces to reach a critical mass of people, and in turn to increase the visibility of climate change education and training.

For the last theme, sustainable consumption and production, a video presentation from **Dr. Arab Hoballah**, one of the driving forces for the 10YFP, was shown. He explained that in order to implement SD, the practicalities of SCP need to be understood, whether it is pollution, natural resources, or ecosystems. The same principles apply to all, no matter whether developing or developed countries are concerned, however approaches should be differentiated, since contexts and needs are different. Dr. Hoballah provided an example

looking at the building sector, whereby in developed countries there is less of a focus on building, whereas in developing countries they are constantly looking to build new buildings, therefore ways to apply resource efficiency within construction in those countries need to be devised, in order to ensure responsible consumption takes place. Local people need to be provided with the ownership to send messages to governments. There needs to be education around how to consume differently, in a responsible manner, thinking about health, impacts, and maintaining resources. A responsible approach requires all stakeholders to be involved – those from the private sector, civil society, as well as consumers. In conjunction, there is a need to educate policymakers, decision makers, businesses and local leaders. RCEs have a critical role in bringing all of these stakeholders together to move on SCP, to drive education in this area and thereby to mainstream SCP in policies, business decisions and in everyday life.

Dr. Lewis Akenji presented on the context and framework around SCP, including the objectives of the 10YFP and framework structure. He also presented on the Sustainable Lifestyles and Education Programme, co-led by the Japanese and Swedish governments, explaining the work areas and the role of the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Committee in selecting projects for the programme. Currently there are 19 projects around the world, with examples including the training of farming methods in Zimbabwe to stimulate the local economy, solar energy initiatives in local communities in Armenia, and an app used in South Africa to limit food waste. In terms of how RCEs could get involved in the 10YFP, and referring to the wealth of ideas and expertise present at the conference, Dr. Akenji proposed the idea of a joint database, searchable in terms of experts, global assessment reports on stakeholder capacities, knowledge frameworks, and joint implementation meetings.

Prof. Mario Tabucanon summarised and closed the session, as unfortunately, time did not allow for discussion:

We heard from our colleagues what the RCEs have been doing and what they offer, we heard from partners from international platforms that there is lots of grounds to work together between the RCEs and the agenda that they are implementing. We heard the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity's approach for heritage parks, and how RCEs can link with them. Claire mentioned one of the areas in which RCEs could collaborate with IPBES is in expert assessment in terms of authorship, editing, reviewing documents, evidence-based policies coming from the RCE Network, building capacity and knowledge. Emmanuelle provided a good example of how to translate global action into local action by RCEs. He has shown it is being done in Ghana. Cristina talked about research and training, she mentioned commonalities in RCEs, climate change works best when it is contextualised locally, e.g. in RCEs. Arab spoke about preconceptions as to how the SCP concepts could be an issue just for developing nations rather than developed nations. RCEs have a lot to offer in correcting these misconceptions. Lewis wrapped up by addressing how SCP addresses tensions in

society, in terms of resources, rising consumerism, accelerating the shift towards SCP in all countries. He identified the structure and objectives of the 10YFP, the entry point to SCP, summarised areas in which RCEs could enter in partnership e.g. create a database, global assessment reports, developing multi-capacity building projects and joint implementation meetings. These are areas where a lot of ground can be covered, and this is just the beginning. Hopefully we can continue the conversation at this conference and beyond.