

**First RCE Thematic Conference: Towards Achieving the SDGs
5-7 December, 2017, Okayama, Japan**



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Institute for the Advanced Study
of Sustainability

**Plenary IV: Closing Plenary
6 December, 2017, Okayama, Japan**

Moderator: Dr. Philip Vaughter (UNU-IAS)

Reporting and Reflection from breakout sessions

Presenters:

- **Dr. Unnikrishnan Payyappallimana (UNU-IAS)**
- **Dr. Riyanti Djalante (UNU-IAS)**
- **Dr. Zinaida Fadeeva (Advisor on Sustainable Consumption and Production to the First RCE Thematic Conference)**
- **Prof. Mario Tabucanon (UNU-IAS)**

Dr. Philip Vaughter opened the Closing Plenary session, thanking everyone for attending the inaugural thematic conference and asking participants to reflect on the past few days of the conference. A brief summary on what was learned and next steps going forward with the themes was then presented.

Dr. Unnikrishnan Payyappallimana reflected on the biodiversity theme:

- Sessions covered Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) educational processes, implementation on the ground, and local assessments (via case studies)
- There are a lot of activities going on, in terms of understanding in an objective manner. Upon running the ecosystem assessment workshop, it was realised that most are doing community mapping but it may not fit into international policy process requirements. Need translation of local experiences into policies
- In the session on policy support tools, policy instruments were looked at in terms of the material, what tools are being used, what the gaps are, and how IPBES can provide support in promoting initiatives in the policy context more specifically

Dr. Riyanti Djalante reflected on the climate change theme:

- RCE (Regional Centres of Expertise on ESD) presentations included topics and ideas such as students acting as agents of change, the incorporation of art in order to foster connection, teacher training programs, and active psychological tools to develop resilience training for teachers
- Discussions looked at the knowledge available and what the barriers to behavioural changes are, what can be learned, as well as developing approaches for ESD
- Seems that there is excellent progress on actions and strategies, there is also a focus on mitigation, whilst sectoral and societal impacts need to be considered
- Looking towards the future, adaptive capacities are achievable

Dr. Zinaida Fadeeva reflected on the sustainable consumption and production theme:

- Two mini panels dedicated towards the modification of learning processes and practices were conducted, with colleagues discussing situated learning for change, engaging across academia and communities (traditional and Indigenous), building knowledge and learning as an ongoing process
- Need to investigate the ways of strengthening relations in international processes
- Discussed the sharing of data and good practices
- Deconstructed the process of evaluation

Questions and Comments from Participants:

- Impressed to meet so many like-minded people doing many magnificent things. Hearing from others who are in far more difficult situations in their countries, makes us realise the actions of many of us in developed countries is appalling, whether it's governments or citizens, e.g. one participated noted how she couldn't sleep at night from thirst/water, whilst in Sydney you see overconsumption and waste – a strong message needs to go back to many Western nations and privileged nations
- It would be great to have a session which ties everything together, one theme that runs through despite there being three themes. Splitting into groups is siloed, there should be a connecting theme, discussion must reflect unification, otherwise will lose opportunities if done separately in silos
- Holding different themes concurrently means participants cannot be in a different group at the same time. Perhaps an idea if themes are further developed into perhaps a publication, so others can hear what went on, not just limited to the website
- It was difficult to listen for two hours to RCE cases without the ability to ask questions. Suggestion is to have a panel, with specific questions, to make it more interactive and participative, as participants want to be able to express their views
- A well-organised conference, won't forget the session on evaluation. It's a learning process, RCEs have not been reporting or evaluating. Sit with your RCE team, learn in the process, identify the gaps, encourage everyone to try it out and enjoy the process
- Suggestion to focus on how to reach the objective rather than focus on results, great to listen to achievements but want to understand how they got to achieving objectives. Huge difference between RCEs in developed v developing countries e.g. access to information, data, Internet access, not possible in some places such as Africa. How did RCEs in Africa achieve their results without these? Therefore looking at the process, not just the solution
- Suggestion to allow for longer time allocations for presentations – time was limited however they would love to speak for longer. Refreshing and encouraging to move forward with their projects, after sharing experiences and being involved in this with the other RCEs
- Great to hear that the Japanese Government sees the value of this network. In terms of the ecological footprint of holding this conference, perhaps RCEs within the geographic area could be visited, if those RCEs were interested in visits

- Greatly appreciate the chance to come, as one of the youngest RCEs, very excited to attend such a conference, very grateful as all of this can have an impact. The university [in Uganda] puts emphasis on ethical values, with an undercurrent of ethics and spirituality. Appreciate the input from everyone, continue through the struggle and don't give up, pursue good ideas to their logical conclusion
- The carbon footprint hits SCP (Sustainable Consumption and Production) and climate change, the mugs example used in the SCP workshop should be modelled in all conferences. We don't have relationships with things we don't see, but everything is interconnected
- Appreciate this network puts together practices from universities, relationships and fosters a positive atmosphere

Prof. Mario Tabucanon delivered a recap of the conference:

As with the speakers during the Opening Ceremony, my mind goes back in time, three years to 2014 when many of you were here, when the Okayama Declaration for RCEs and ESD was adopted at the 9th Global RCE Conference in this sunny city of Okayama. The declaration acknowledged the transformative contribution of RCEs. During the decade our community was committed to accelerate, upscale and mainstream ESD actions. The mission of the RCEs could only be acknowledged if we built strong networks and capacities for research and innovation and strong governance systems. Three years later we are here again, reaffirming that and demonstrating what has been done. This First RCE Thematic Conference is historic and a great milestone for our network. We took stock of where the community stands in terms of utilising learning as an instrument for developing actions in local communities. We celebrated successes, and acknowledged the challenges upon us through the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Starting from yesterday, we heard about what Okayama city is doing, the Okayama ESD Project, the ESD Okayama Model characterised by multi-stakeholder approaches, community-based ESD, involvement of academia and businesses, projects, whether it is producing an umbrella, sustainable building processes in Denmark, the energy-water-food nexus in Cairo, the learning processes are similar and compatible. Different cases were presented yesterday, but two words encapsulate the cases; 'transformative' and 'innovative' because of the RCEs. Tsukamoto-san spoke about the progress of the RCE movement, and talked about the roadmap. Thank you also to the Ubuntu Committee of Peers for the RCEs. This first conference has been a success as we heard from your reflections, we hope there are more to come. Related to the SDGs, multi-stakeholder approaches through RCEs are a vehicle for change, vehicle for transforming local agendas into actions, and provide learning platforms in communities. We wish you all the best as you return to your respective RCEs, thank you.