



ECOSOC
YOUTH FORUM

YOUTH2030

Economic and Social Council Youth Forum

**“Youth shaping sustainable and innovative solutions:
Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in
times of crises”**

SIDE EVENT AT THE 2024 ECOSOC YOUTH FORUM

Greening Higher Education Institutions: bridging SDGs 4 and 13

18 April 2024, 1:30-3:00 PM EST Time
Doha CR, UNOSSC Office, 304 E 45th Street, FF-11th FL
Online: On zoom

Organized by :

- [UNESCO IESALC](#)
- [UNOSSC](#)

In collaboration with :

- [UNESCO SDG4 Youth & Student Network](#)
- [UNICEF](#)
- [National Geographic Learning](#)
- [University of Helsinki](#)
- [Education Above All](#)
- [Technological University Dublin](#)

Background on the side-event

This side event aimed to indicate possible pathways to provide education stakeholders and communities with the knowledge they need to drive a green transformation in higher education through the connections and mutual support between SDGs 4 and 13. Harnessing the resources of higher education institutions and cooperating with partners in different sectors is critical to achieving this objective successfully. Furthermore, the shift to a sustainable society requires the incorporation of green concepts into science, technology, and innovation (STI), including the value and promotion of youth led projects for green STI aimed at a sustainable future. It also stresses the leading role higher education should play in fostering a sustainable and environmentally conscious society, building the basis for a better tomorrow for future generations.

Key Issues discussed

- **The importance of green STI in achieving sustainable development:** Climate change poses difficult threats, particularly in developing countries. There is a need for collective, urgent, inclusive, and prompt climate action. Strategic partnership, claimed in SDG 17, is needed to address interconnected challenges, empower a new generation of leaders, and foster people-to-people cooperation, to ultimately promote a more just and inclusive world.
- **Driving environmental initiatives and establishing sustainable partnerships in Higher Education:** Universities need to see sustainability as a strategic area for actors to get involved and cooperate. Uniting students, researchers, teachers, and business partners can make innovation more impactful. It is also necessary to collaborate at the city level and with different national and international networks on environmental initiatives. Nevertheless, acknowledgment of the context of each institution and its privileges and challenges is needed to address environmental action. Strong institutional guidelines will help in sharing mindful partnerships.
- **Data quality as a drive for social development:** There is a lack of interest in creating partnerships with academia, which directly affects the quality of data, and, consequently, has negative impacts on the planning and implementation of evidence-based goals. Quality data must be available for stakeholders at all levels as a pillar for informed decision-making. Furthermore, knowledge sharing is not effective if the data behind it is not strong enough.
- **Interagency Efforts towards Greening Higher Education – “Greening with STI” Pilot Project under UNESCO IESALC-UNOSSC co-launched SUCN:** UNESCO IESALC presented the four pillars of greening higher education contextualized from the Greening Education Partnership to guide higher education efforts towards greening impacts: greening teacher training and curriculum, greening STI, greening skills and jobs, and greening universities. While each pillar has a heavy focus on collective efforts and meaningful partnership, Greening STI was exemplified as an interagency effort by UNESCO IESALC and the United Nations Office of South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) to promote STI design, implementation, and transfer within the Global South, a pilot project of South-South University Cooperation Network.
- **Ways to work on green university and transfer of green science, technology, and innovation (STI) for sustainable development:** Integrate the SDGs into content and teaching methodology by addressing the key elements when learning about climate change and inspiring through local and global exploration and impact your community, aiming to lift the curriculum off the page. For instance, creating projects about each SDG.
- **Localize the needs:** It is essential to contextualize the needs of each institution and stakeholder. Understanding different learning styles and preferences will improve education outcomes and efficiency. Not all learners learn by reading or listening, some

prefer to rely on audiovisual materials, project-based or practical initiatives, among many other options. Institutions should focus on experimenting with learning materials and adapting to students in each specific context. It is important to be mindful that not all young people have the same privileges and opportunities.

- **Students and youth responsibilities in sustainability:** Encourage students to be active citizens on sustainability matters by integrating green curriculums in higher education. A bottom-up approach is needed to find answers to fundamental questions and young people have an essential role in this matter. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that not every young person has the same opportunities.
- **High-level structural constraints:** Existent limitations concerning the elaboration of relevant data and international environmental agreements keep the objectives far from being met. Collective effort is needed while being aware of the economic decisions being made without considering their environmental cost.
- **Knowledge is key to leading sustainable education:** Sustainability issues are linked to all educational fields. It is important to provide sustainability training to all students and staff members and sustainability discipline courses to encourage entrepreneurship. Offering platforms and forums to foster engagement and creating initiatives can increase interest in the matter and make students, staff and alumni join sustainability responsibility networks. Sustainability funding to work on daily activities for students and staff is fundamental to enhancing innovative activities and platforms for businesses and stakeholders to contribute to the university's sustainability action.
- **Formalization of the Partnership between UNESCO IESALC and National Geographic Learning:** The panel discusses the significance of the collaboration between UNESCO IESALC and National Geographic Learning (NGL) to promote education for sustainable development in providing better relevancy and upgrading greening education methodology and delivery into the space of higher education and beyond. Two major avenues of the collaboration entail both a wider understanding of greening higher education and a systematic transformation of greening integration through teaching training provided at higher education level. The formal signing of the partnership agreement between UNESCO IESALC and NGL is highlighted as an important step in solidifying their commitment to sustainable higher education initiatives and the significance of public-private partnership in achieving sustainable development.
- **Role of Higher Education in Achieving SDGs:** The panel underscored the pivotal role of higher education in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG13 related to climate action. Multi stakeholder collaboration is emphasized as essential for effective progress in greening higher education.

Actions

and

Commitment

- **Strategic Partnerships:** Emphasize the importance of strategic partnerships, particularly focusing on SDG 17, to address interconnected environmental challenges. Collaborations should involve entities like UNOSSC, fostering inclusive and prompt climate action.

- **Empowering New Generation Leaders:** Recognize the need to empower a new generation of leaders who are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and values to address climate change. Ms. Serena McCalla (iResearch Corporation Founder, National Geographic Explorer) encapsulated the essence of highlighting key takeaways and outlining actionable steps for the way forward. Emphasizing the mission of empowering youth as a top priority, she underscored the importance of nurturing future innovators in science. She proposed fostering the "five P's": passion, patience, prioritization, perseverance, and purpose, as essential elements in keeping students engaged and motivated in the STI fields, instead of losing their talents to other fields. She urged collective reflection and action inspiring youth to stay committed to STI for sustainability as rewarding and meaningful careers
- **Inspiring youth:** Inspire youth to get involved in climate action and promote innovation. An example of good practices is the work the Misk Foundation is doing in Saudi Arabia, creating projects for students and young people to learn, collaborate and be a driving force of green solutions.
- **Institutional Cooperation:** Encourage institutional cooperation, exemplified by the University of Helsinki's collaboration with the city of Helsinki and various national and international networks. Such collaborations foster impactful environmental initiatives.
- **Integration of SDGs in Curricula:** Integrate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into content, teaching methodology, and curriculum across all educational fields, following National Geographic Learning's framework and eight key elements for teaching about climate change.
- **Youth Engagement:** Actively involve young people, students, and educational stakeholders in building green and sustainable partnerships, with support from organizations like Education Above All. Provide platforms, forums, and training opportunities to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills.
- **Data Quality and Decision-making Supported by Technical University of Dublin:** Highlight the importance of data quality for social development and effective decision-making. As Mr. Moazzam Syed stated, it is fundamental to encourage partnerships with academia to ensure reliable data for informed policy decisions.
- **Promotion of a Just and Inclusive World:** Strive for a more just and inclusive world by addressing the needs of marginalized students and communities, supported by UNICEF's initiatives in greening education. Ensure equal access to education, resources, and decision-making processes.
- **Collective Action Advocated by UNESCO IESALC:** Stress the need for collective action to address climate crisis and environmental challenges, advocated by UNESCO IESALC. Promote collaboration between governments, inter-governmental organizations, civil society, academia, youth, and the private sector.

- **Incorporation of Sustainability in Curricula Supported by National Geographic Learning:** Foster the incorporation of sustainability and climate action in all curricula, supported by National Geographic Learning's initiatives. Prepare students as future global citizens and active participants in addressing environmental issues.
- **Promotion of Youth Entrepreneurship by Education Above All:** Open universities to young people to foster youth entrepreneurship, with support from Education Above All. Utilize university resources as spaces for youth to lead and contribute to sustainability efforts.
- **Support from Non-Academic Institutions:** Recognize the role of non-academic institutions and civil society organizations in supporting young people, students, and educational stakeholders. The SDGeneration Network provides training, opportunities, and resources to empower marginalized students and engage with civil society for broader impact.
- **Inspiration and Engagement through National Geographic Learning:** Inspire and engage higher education stakeholders to contribute to sustainability efforts at higher education and beyond, drive systematic changes through greening teacher training, develop future-ready citizens at all levels, and integrate greening curriculum through partnerships with organizations like National Geographic Learning.

Useful Links

- The event recording can be found here in [Spanish](#) and here in [English](#)
- UNESCO IESALC website: <https://www.iesalc.unesco.org/en/>