

Opening Remarks
10th Global RCE Conference
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Naoya Tsukamoto
Project Manager, ESD, UNU-IAS

Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies, and gentleman,

It is my great pleasure to welcome all of you to the 10th Global RCE Conference on education for sustainable development. This marks our first global meeting since the commencement of the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development, as well as the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals. Many of you here today have already begun work on one or both of these international platforms, just as many of you are continuing your own best practices and projects from our first decade of work together.

First, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to our local hosts here in Yogyakarta for their tremendous support over the last eight months. RCE Yogyakarta is not only welcoming us as their guests, but also as their students, as they will be showcasing many of their ESD initiatives over the following three days, providing each of us the opportunity to learn from their examples. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Ministry of the Environment – Japan for their tremendous support for this conference and for the Global RCE Network as a whole. It is with this support that we are able to interact as a global network at venues such as this – creating a space where ideas and practices around education for sustainable development are able to be shared and transformed into workable solutions for today's sustainability challenges.

Since our last Global RCE Conference in Okayama at the end of 2014, 20 new RCEs around the world have joined our global community. This year, in Yogyakarta, we welcome representatives of over 50 RCEs from over 30 countries, with many more around the world who will be eager to continue discussions that we start here over the next three days into the coming year. This year marks the first Global RCE Conference since the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals by the UN General Assembly in September of 2015. The 2030 Development Agenda unites all countries in the quest for sustainable and peaceful development, and the SDGs will require drastic changes in all of our societies to realize this vision. This is also our first Global RCE Conference since the passage of the historic Paris Treaty, which has created a framework where by all nations must contribute to fighting climate change to protect our planet and to protect our future.

As we begin our work here in Yogyakarta, take time to get to know your colleagues from around the globe. Opportunities like this are rare, where a global community united in a common cause is able to interact face to face. Our experiences here over the coming days – what we learn, who we talk to, how we share our knowledge – are not merely anecdotes. They are the basis for new projects we can work on together to implement the Sustainable Development Goals, new ideas we can take back to our home communities to aid in the implementation of the Paris treaty, and new practices we engage with make sustainability a reality not only for ourselves but for our planet.

In concluding, let me wish all of you the best in our important work over the coming days, and may this mark the beginning of our important work over the coming year. Thank you very much for your time, your commitment, and your passion in creating a more sustainable world. It is my sincere hope that participants here today will have active discussions during the next three days, and work together by creating concrete steps to achieve our sustainable future around the world.

Prof. Dwikorita Karnawati
Rektor, Universitas Gadjah Mada

RCEs translate SDGs into local realities. Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM) is a university of villages and Indonesia is a country of villages. A large amount of the population has moved massively into the cities. In 2015 only 45% of the overall population is left in villages, bringing more poverty into the rural areas. We all have the same mission to combat poverty through ESD. One of the important root problems is and remains education. Most of our manpower or productive aid still needs improvement on the educative level. Most of our labour is still not educated to high school level. Some have not even graduated from primary school. How can we educate the people?

In terms of support we are very lucky. The minister of transport has been very supportive. UGM is also being supported by the national planning minister. We have a programme in place to continuously improve our graduates' skills. It is up to all of us to work together to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Dr. Subandi
Deputy Minister for Human Development and Culture, Ministry of National Planning / Bappenas

Malnutrition, food security and healthy lifestyles are major issues in Indonesia. Rural areas often still have no access to basic necessities such as sanitation and water supply. The private sector needs to be included more in sustainable development. Currently there is a non-inclusion of business resources. The unfinished Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agenda list in Indonesia entails many different issues. The translation of the MDGs into SDGs needs to happen universally in both developed and developing countries. SDGs should be integrated in all dimensions (social, economic and environment). No one should be left behind. Our population is dispersed and it poses a significant challenge to integrate everyone in the cities, on the islands and in the villages.

Dr. Subandi went on to explain the different SDG plans in Indonesia with national SDG coordinators and key documents in place. Developing a database for the 240 SDGs indicators was a particularly major challenge for Indonesia. He emphasized that Indonesia was open to multilateral and bilateral collaborations with other countries to enable the implementation of the SDGs.