

Message from the UNU-IAS RCE Global Service Centre

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The 9th African RCE Meeting at University of eSwatini

Good morning Minister, distinguished ladies and gentlemen. I am Fumiko Noguchi, Research Fellow of United Nations University-Institute for the Advance Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS). I feel honored that I am able to make this speech in front of Mr. Moses Vilcati, Minister of tourism and Environmental Affairs and to be a part of this important event in this beautiful kingdom.

First of all, I would like to congratulate on the successful organisation of the 9th African RCE Regional Meeting. African RCE regional meeting has been held annually since 2011. This is the 9th year - this is remarkable. This shows all your untiring dedication to empower local communities for social change and the existence of a strong supporting network to support your efforts.

Here, on behalf of RCE Global Service Centre, I would like to show my gratitude to those who committed to organising this meeting, including President Mr Masango Sone and Vice President Ms Belusile Mhlanga, Regional advisors, Professor Goolam Mohamedbhai and Professor Akpezi Ogbuigwe, Simalanga and Isaac for organising this meeting. In particular, Ms Mhlanga has made a lot

of efforts behind the scene to put everyone and everything together to make this meeting happen in Eswatini as a host organisation despite a lot of logistic challenges. Also thank you very much for Professor Justice Thwala and the University of Eswatini to provide this wonderful space for us to meet and discuss. Thank-you is also extended to all the participants from various parts of Africa.

[RCE Updates](#)

Let me share some updates from RCE Global Service Centre. Since the launch of RCE in 2005, our network has been expanding. Now, RCEs across the world count 168, which are clustered into four regions, including Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe and Americas. Each region has convened very active meetings on annual basis. Most recently, in May, RCE Hangzhou in China organised Asia-Pacific regional meeting, which was concluded successfully. After this meeting, two regional meetings will be organised in September. RCE Crete in Greece is organising European RCE meeting, and RCE Greater Burlington in Vermont, USA is hosting the Americas RCE meeting. Another update is about the newly acknowledged RCEs at the RCE Global Meeting in 2018. Five RCEs joined us, including RCE Sunbardans in Bangladesh, RCE Qingdao in China, RCE Sakon Nakhon in Thailand and RCE North Texas in the USA and RCE Gran Caracas in Venezuela. We received 10 applications for this year which are under review right now.

Also, I would like to remind you that we have the portal site on our RCE website. There, you can update your project profile at any time. It will be great if you can

look at your profile page on the website and update your project on a regular basis. Many RCEs in the world are keen to know your local community efforts on ESD. This portal is the one that unites all the RCEs all over the world and the tool to attract the interest of policy makers and researchers.

[Post GAP, SDGs](#)

This year, 2019 is a key milestone year to ESD field. The Global Action Programme on ESD (GAP on ESD), which has been conducted for the last five years, will end this year, and UNESCO is searching for the direction for post-GAP and ESD for SDGs by 2030.

UNESCO proposed the framework for ESD for 2030 and the 206 session of UNESCO Executive Board adopted it in April. This proposal will be adopted at the 40th session of UNESCO General Assembly in October. However, UNESCO has not developed the implementation plan yet.

The member states governments are watching the direction of UNESCO ESD policy and searching for the way to follow for their national ESD policy. So, the situation around ESD for 2030 is still unclear at global and national levels.

[Our confusion and importance of networking](#)

At the local community level, the situation of ESD for SDGs is much unclearer.

In the last few months, I had opportunities to discuss the post-GAP and ESD for SDGs process with the stakeholders in Japan and in the Asia-Pacific Region. I have observed that many are trying to articulate what does 'SDGs' really mean

in a real life, while they are struggling in finding the way to align with SDGs better.

The community issues are complex and diverse. Many of us understand the importance of holistic and integrated approach to ESD. However, SDGs has been predominantly discussed by taking a silo-based approach by focusing on individual SDGs goal. So what is happening is that many ESD stakeholders try to cut their broad and diverse community efforts into pieces what can fit into the individual SDGs goal. How can we implement and advocate our holistic way of understanding on sustainable development in ESD, in the very situation where the majority are understanding SDGs from very silo-based perspective? What can we do to bridge this policy-practice gap? Is this Okay?

Key to overcome this challenge is ‘networking’. I think this regional meeting will be a great opportunity for us to unpack this confusion around ESD for SDGs. We will listen to the others practices which tell us some clues to success and to overcome the challenges. By listening to the others, helps us to reflect on our efforts back home and to develop the new strategy. I hope this meeting produce meaningful and fruitful discussions and learning that every one of us can take new-learnings and re-learnings home.

Thank you very for listening to my speech. Arigatou.