11ᵗʰ Global RCE Conference: Education for the Sustainable Development Goals
7-9 December, 2018, Cebu, the Philippines

Plenary V
Closing Plenary
8 December, 2018, Cebu, the Philippines

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  - **Dr. Hiroaki Takiguchi, UNU-IAS**
  - **Prof. Teresita J. Rodriguez, RCE Cebu**

Dr. Philip Vaughter from UNU-IAS moderated the Closing Plenary and began by calling on rapporteurs from each session to summarise the discussions which spanned across four regions and 17 SDGs.

Regional Sessions
Africa – Ms. Mirriam Moonga (RCE Lusaka) provided a summary, noting that the participants at the African regional session comprised of nine members from different RCEs. The discussion that took place looked at a number of points, including reviving dormant RCEs, the host of the next regional RCE conference, repositioning/turning around African RCEs, and challenges and successes of RCEs in the region. It was noted that several RCEs in Africa are inactive. Potential reasons for dormancy were discussed, as well as what measures are needed to revive these. A discussion also took place on repositioning, due to some RCEs not being visible, or little national recognition of RCEs. Within institutions that RCEs are hosted in, some staff members are not even aware of the RCE movement. Looking at the way forward, general RCE funds would assist with initiatives to become more active and visible. There was some discussion in relation to the need for greater communication among all stakeholders, including between RCE coordinators within a Whatsapp group, that has to date worked very well. Related to this, it was stressed that representation should occur in all regional meetings and conferences to continue dialogues face-to-face, however financial support for members to attend is an issue. Finally, the need for a focal person at UNU for the region was highlighted.

Europe – Ms. Laura Curtis-Moss (RCE Scotland) provided a summary, mentioning that topics discussed included the funding landscape in the European Union, how to work better together with European RCEs outside the EU and other RCEs around the world, and the need to rethink messaging and positioning. Moving forward, participants acknowledged the importance of being more proactive, more cooperative, and working across country borders with others doing projects on the same themes. Some themes discussed included

vocational education, working with older learners, climate change, questioning the anthropocentric nature of ESD, repositioning as a network of networks, and reaching out to partners who have networks not just in the EU.

Asia-Pacific – Prof. Dexter Lo (RCE Northern Mindanao) provided a summary of this session, recounting that 51 participants from 14 RCEs presented lightning sessions (initiatives presented within one minute), discussed inter-RCE collaboration (centred around youth mobility among RCEs in Asia-Pacific), and talked about competitions held by different RCEs which could be open to others (ESD Global Prize, Video competition, courses offered by universities). Achievements such as the Asia-Pacific Youth Network coordinated by youth from two different RCEs and its virtual summit was also acknowledged.

Americas – Ms. Nicole Kennard (RCE Atlanta) began her summary be mentioning that representatives from Greater Portland, Atlanta, Borderlands Mexico-USA, Charles Hopkins, and Stefanie Mallow were present at the session. At the last regional meeting, items discussed included increasing community inclusivity and engagement and starting a regional RCE Youth Network. RCEs need to engage with communities to understand the main issues being faced, as well as find ways to bring more voices like industry to the table. Helping communities plan and hold cultural events could be used to bring in industry partners. Living Labs is an example – it is set up in different communities to help address issues on the ground. Other areas discussed included sponsoring youth to attend conferences, increasing communication (and finding bilingual contacts in the instance of language barriers), and the idea of starting a Whatsapp group to facilitate this.

A brief overview was then given by selected rapporteurs on each of the workshop sessions.

Workshop Sessions
Mr. Janne Leino (RCE Hangzhou) provided an overview of the workshop 'Multi-stakeholders' Involvement in ESD: How Schools Can Enable a Community's Transformation Towards Sustainability'. The session consisted of the workshop, short input, then discussion, where the need for SDG stakeholders mainly in rural areas was identified, as well as the notion of intergenerational responsibility, working with different stakeholders.

Mr. David Rangan (RCE Denmark) provided a summary of his workshop 'Teaching the SDGs in a Holistic Framework' in which they worked with two didactic tools. The 'Wheel of SDGs' game enables students to reflect about the SDGs and serves as a method to construct knowledge socially. It was developed by an NGO in Denmark and consists of questions intended to aid in the understanding of the SDGs, and which also allows for reflection in a critical manner. As the SDGs are holistic and interconnected, relating SDGs to a story, problem, or real examples from the community/world works best when teaching them.

Next was the workshop 'Macro and Micro Level Considerations for More Effective Community Development Intervention Selection and Introduction of New Technologies', facilitated by Mr. Anthony Wakwe Lawrence (RCE Greater Yenagoa). This workshop was segmented into a presentation, a Q&A session, then group discussion on scenarios which were provided. Based on what was discussed, entry points and tips were identified such as adopting a process to enhance community participation in implementing the SDGs, and discussion around community awareness in education to manage population growth.

The workshop 'Food for Thought: Empowering and Enabling Meaningful, Enjoyable, Inclusive Action on the Goals' facilitated by Ms. Kirsten Johnson Leask (RCE Scotland) investigated how to make the move from strategy and policy to making the SDGs relevant for learners of all ages in all kinds of settings. It consisted of two parts: firstly a theoretical exploration of what constitutes a quality education, what it looks like and the theory behind it, and how it can empower the knowledge and skills we wish to see in our learners. Secondly, it looked at the levers which already exist for embedding ESD, from a Scottish perspective, how it is embedded in curriculum and teacher standards, as well as the challenges faced by practitioners in bringing it to life. Looking at how food can bring the SDGs to life, it explored abstract themes in a culturally relevant and place-based way.

The workshop 'Human Trafficking in One of the Biggest Hubs' facilitated by Ms. Brittany Lee Foutz (RCE Greater Atlanta) looked at a growing criminal industry and how it relates to SDGs 3, 4, and 16 SDGs, as well as how it can relate to all the SDGs in ways we don't realise. Root causes and how they could be combatted were discussed.

In the workshop 'Promoting and Implementing the SDGs - SDGs Flashcards', facilitated by Dr. Vaughter (UNU-IAS), participants formed small groups and used supplied flashcards as ways to start conversations with communities and sectors. Feedback was that the cards were a useful entry point, however more languages and simplified terms were required when engaging with the public. More meaningful actions are needed in addition to simply thinking about the issues raised.

Following these overviews, participants were given the opportunity to reflect and share their comments and questions:

Prof. Goolam Mohamedbhai: How can we encourage RCEs from different regions to collaborate, how can they learn from each other and help each other?

Dr. Carlos Pascual: [In regards to continuing] the collaboration after people retire, now there are 166 RCEs worldwide, some are dormant, so building a network of networks is a very good model for RCE networks.

Mr. Usman Muhammad: It has been a wonderful two days of active participation and collaborations. I always come from the youth aspect – we had a structure in place for youth, but what is needed for the Global RCE Service Centre is to have regional coordinators, and build a template for terms of references for what is expected for each youth person in each RCE. We believe youth have a role to play and contribute in projects.

Dr. Vaughter: Coordinators are the bridge for getting youth involved and providing information on youth focal points.

Prof. Kim Smith: Curious about how we can support regional conferences and international conferences, sparsely represented here as we only had our [regional Americas] meeting a month ago. It's a challenge, hope the folks who were able to make it had a wonderful time, but would like to see more engagement.

Prof. Carolina Lopez: I second Kim's comment regarding the closeness of the Americas and Global Conference Meeting each year, if it is possible to move, that would help.

Dr. Vaughter: Need to work with local hosts as well, however are aware of these comments.

Dr. Jana Dlouha: RCE is a very unique movement, because of bottom-up characters, democracy is a vital part of ESD.

Representative from RCE Hangzhou: Suggestion to combine one Regional meeting with a Global meeting, e.g. combine the Asia-Pacific meeting with the Global meeting. That way more RCEs can participate in the international meeting, and can know each other well.

Mr. Jos Hermans: The EU is the biggest funder in the world externally, and presents an opportunity for RCEs looking for project funding. Might I suggest installing a working group over four continents to elaborate on a toolkit for those RCEs who want to profile themselves in their region but also internationally with a group of RCEs.

Following the reflection from participants, Prof. Mario Tabucanon from UNU-IAS provided a recap of the conference:

"Fellow members of the RCE community, I think there is no better way to start a recap of the conference than to say that RCE Cebu and the Global RCE Community present here deserve our wholehearted congratulations for a successful conference. It's not only us that knows that things are happening at the University of the Philippines, but the whole city of Cebu. Today's issue of the Freeman newspaper have featured two articles about this conference. One article authored by Cherry Ballescas, the other by Ian Manticajon, so the city knows. I think that RCE Cebu needs to be congratulated especially, because in 2006, RCE Cebu was the first acknowledged RCE in the Philippines, and second only to RCE

Penang, in Southeast Asia, and among the first 15 in the world. This 11th Global RCE Conference is a fitting tribute, to an RCE so dedicated and passionate about ESD and delivering to the community.

One of the key factors in a successful RCE is the support of the local government. You need local government support, and the city of Cebu government was there right from the start. In 2006, the Mayor of Cebu, the same now, opened the first RCE workshop, and his message then was about multi-stakeholder partnership. The same message was cited by his representative yesterday, in Plenary I. Since 1988, the city has been engaged with multi-stakeholder partnerships with civil societies, and now are aligning their actions with the SDGs. We should also thank the Government of the City of Cebu for the dinner and entertainment that they offered to us.

As I said yesterday, this conference is about celebration, celebration of the accomplishments of the RCEs. We heard yesterday the presentations of flagship projects, best practices, which we all admire, recognise and are thankful for. This conference is also a celebration for the recognition for the ability and capacity for RCEs to deliver learning processes – the workshops we just heard from, those are excellent capacity-building processes that should be delivered to the community. This conference is also an expression of acknowledgement. There are lots of things to be done.

As you know, at the end of the DESD in 2014, we had the end of ESD, but the beginning of GAP. The purpose was to accelerate, upscale, to mainstream. That was the theme of Plenary II. This was followed by the panel discussion which superimposed the necessity for RCEs to address the SDGs. So I would like to end, that this conference is a restatement of the mission of the RCE. If you look at the RCE strategy and the roadmap, we had three basic directions, one of which is to build a strong network globally, and that's why we had the regional sessions that were aimed at the question of how do we strengthen our network – inter-RCE collaboration, that was the purpose of the regional sessions. We also state the major role of RCEs – learning through capacity-building of institutions and individuals, we have done that here. As well as linking local actions of RCEs into national and global processes. So, all in all, we can say this two-day conference has been very successful and has been able to address the overarching theme of addressing the SDGs. This is all because of your active participation over the last two days. I would like to end my reflection, and thank you all for your attention."

Dr. Vaughter thanked Prof. Tabucanon for his recap and asked Dr. Hiroaki Takiguchi, UNU-IAS to deliver his closing remarks:

"Professor Cherry, Attorney Liza Corro, Chancellor, University of the Philippines Cebu, Prof. Teresita, Rodriguez, members of the global RCE community – we have successfully come together for the 11th time. We feel the RCE bond, the Ubuntu spirit, which stems from

passion and a common desire to work together, to contribute to sustainable societies in communities. We are glad you have come and on behalf of UNU-IAS, thanks for making this a success. Thanks to our outstanding hosts, the stakeholders, led by the University of the Philippines, for the successful outcome of the conference. We truly acknowledge the amount of work and planning that has been put in, which has led to a productive, fruitful, and exciting conference. We would like to thank our partners, the Ministry of the Environment Japan, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, and other international and national organisations involved in the conference we are privileged to be working with. We must also give a special mention to the Ubuntu Committee for reviewing RCE applications and for their strategic advice. We would like to thank all participants from the host country and around the world – please do enjoy your stay here, and we wish you all a safe return."

Dr. Hubert Zanoria from RCE Cebu provided some closing remarks, adding that discussions allowed participants to interact and learn about areas from the eradication of poverty to issues of human trafficking, along with common themes related to sustainable management of our limited resources and ecosystem. Dr. Zanoria wished everyone a safe journey back, and with those parting words, the conference was closed.