

On 4 June 2015, the ProSPER.Net Forum on Sustainability in Higher Education was held at Tongji University in Shanghai, China on the theme of “Higher Education for Sustainable Development – Advancing the Nagoya Declaration”. Held in conjunction with the ProSPER.Net Joint General Assembly and Board Meeting, and the International Student Conference on Environment and Sustainability (ISCES), the Forum was well attended with participants of ISCES coming from every corner of the world.

The Nagoya Declaration on Higher Education for Sustainable Development was adopted by the participants and supporters of the International Conference on Higher Education for Sustainable Development in Nagoya, Japan on 9 November 2014. It reaffirms the responsibility of higher education to pursue sustainable development and to commit their support to further advancing sustainable development through education for sustainable development (ESD). It recognizes the accomplishments of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), looks towards the implementation of the Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD, and supports the realignment of educational frameworks in the spirit of the post-2015 development agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The forum discussed the transformative role of higher education by sharing experiences and examples of good practices, and discussed policy implications, in the context of the Nagoya Declaration. *Dr. Kazuhiko Takemoto*, Director of UNU-IAS, spoke about the various initiatives of ProSPER.Net that are geared towards higher education institution transformation for sustainable development, while *Prof. Wu Jiang*, Vice President of Tongji University introduced the university’s achievements in education for sustainable development. *Prof. Wang Zhijia*, former Special Adviser to the UNEP Executive Director, and former Director-General of International Cooperation Department, State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA) of China, stressed the important role of higher education in sustainable development in his presentation on “Higher Education and the Future We Want”.

Moderated by *Prof. Mario Tabucanon* of UNU-IAS, the panel discussion took center stage in delving into the critical issues. *Prof. Jiang Dahe* of Tongji University shared experiences of the university in delivering leadership programmes in environment for sustainable development. By integrating sustainability into the curricula of fields of study across the university, he affirmed the university’s commitment to ESD at the national launching of the UN DESD in 2005, hosted by Tongji University. Another panelist, *Prof. Yuji Suzuki* of Hosei University emphasized the behavioral change needed in human practices and underscored the importance of connecting political and natural sciences, and the co-existence of various ethnic groups as a requisite for change. This was echoed by *Prof. Tony Dalton* of RMIT University, thereby adding that social scientists must be involved in public policymaking and in senior leadership positions in universities; he acknowledged the Nagoya Declaration which recognizes that the rigidity of university organizational structures might be causing impediment to transformation of higher education institutions.

*Ms. Ying Zhaolin*, a student panelist from Tongji University, asked universities to empower students through provision of platforms for debates on SD and ESD; she suggested to explore problems of SD and ESD implementation and to establish an indicator system for monitoring. *Ms. Mila Mezei*, another student panelist from the University of British Columbia, emphasized the connection with nature, and the importance of involving students in creating a campus culture of sustainability.

Other issues discussed in the open forum pertained to impacts of the past decade of global efforts on ESD, the shortcomings and challenges that needed to be addressed, including the strengthening of interfaces

amongst science, society and policy. It was also pointed out to align basic and higher education, conduct public awareness campaigns, and to develop competences and skills of policymakers. In all of these efforts, the goal of alleviating poverty must not be swept aside. A question was also raised on green economy, as to how economic prosperity can be decoupled from environmental degradation, if societal practices did not change. Due to the global efforts on SD and ESD, the world is making progress, but many challenges ahead must be overcome to create sustainable societies. The role of higher education for sustainable development remains immensely important.