

## Draft Concept Note

# ProSPER.Net Webinar on Sustainability in Higher Education – Accelerating transition towards achieving the SDGs during and after the COVID-19 pandemic –

Virtual, 3pm-5pm (Japan Standard Time) Friday, 16 October 2020

## 1. Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has massively affected economies, societies, and the environment around the world, and its impact has been experienced across all sectors. Higher education institutions have needed to adapt to this unprecedented situation.

Multiple surveys have been done on the immediate impact of COVID-19 to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and their responses to the pandemic, e.g. “The impact of COVID-19 on Higher Education around the world<sup>1</sup>” by the International Association of Universities (IAU) and the “ProSPER.Net COVID-19 Survey” by United Nations University, Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS). However, the number of infected cases continues to soar, and we continue to adapt with COVID-19 in our “new normal”. It is necessary for HEIs to rethink and redesign their strategies, and to envision mid- and long-term scenarios to cope with the challenges brought forward and exacerbated by this virus.

The pandemic forces us to take a fundamental shift in our mindset and our society. HEIs will need to rethink how they can move forward to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, and how HEIs can contribute to building back better and accelerating actions towards a sustainable society in and post pandemic era.

The Promotion of Sustainability in Postgraduate Education and Research Network (ProSPER.Net) (<https://prospernet.ias.unu.edu/>), an alliance of academic institutions in Asia-Pacific, embodies the collective determination of like-minded, leading HEIs in pursuit of sustainable development, and its members aspire to contribute to the achievement of the Agenda 2030<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup>The report is available on the website. [https://www.iau-aiu.net/IMG/pdf/iau\\_covid19\\_and\\_he\\_survey\\_report\\_final\\_may\\_2020.pdf](https://www.iau-aiu.net/IMG/pdf/iau_covid19_and_he_survey_report_final_may_2020.pdf)

The second global survey by IAU which will be conducted in October 2020 will focus on mid-term impact. The third one conducted in 2021 will focus on long-term impact.

<sup>2</sup> The Japanese Ministry of the Environment (MOEJ), through its contribution to UNU-IAS ESD Programme, has been supporting ProSPER.Net projects and activities since the network launched in 2008.

## 2. Date and Time:

16 October 2020 (Friday), 3pm-5pm (Japanese Standard Time)

## 3. Organizer(s)

United Nations University, Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS)

## 4. Objective

- To share experiences and discuss the **challenges and opportunities** for HEIs from a **short, mid-term and long-term** perspective during and post COVID-19 era.
- To explore what HEIs can do to **build back better and accelerate transition toward achieving the SDGs**.

## 5. Key questions

- How COVID-19 pandemic negatively (adversely) and positively affected the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?
- How COVID-19 pandemic has (positively/negatively) affected HEIs and how they have responded to the challenges?
- What are challenges and opportunities for HEIs facing COVID, especially in research, education and outreach, from a mid-and long-term perspective, and what kind of strategies are in the works to address these?
- Universities have very compartmentalized departments of expertise, however, responding to complex problems such as those caused by the COVID pandemic often require a trans-disciplinary response. How can universities better coordinate different departments to work together on complex problems?
- The COVID pandemic has occurred while many other crises were unfolding around the globe. How can HEIs meaningfully implement the Sustainable Development Goals in an integrated and localized way while responding to the COVID pandemic?
- The COVID pandemic has highlighted the many inequalities in our world, including inter-generational inequality. How can universities help make sure the current generation of students are not disadvantaged compared to their parents and grandparents as education institutions respond to the pandemic?

## 6. Programme

Time	
15:00- 15:15	<p><b>[Opening Session]</b></p> <p><b><u>Opening Remarks</u></b></p> <p><b>Prof. Shinobu Yume Yamaguchi</b> (Director, United Nations University, Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS))</p> <p><b><u>Video Message</u></b></p> <p><b>Ms. Kiyoka Miki</b> (Director, Office of Environmental Education, General Policy Division, Ministry's Secretariat, Ministry of the Environment, Japan)</p>
15:15- 16:55	<p><b>[Panel Discussion]</b></p> <p><b><i>“Sustainability in Higher Education – Accelerating transition towards achieving the SDGs – during and after the COVID-19 pandemic –</i></b></p> <p><b><u>Moderator</u></b></p> <p><b>Prof. Mario Tabucanon</b> (Senior Visiting Professor, UNU-IAS)</p> <p><b><u>Panelists</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dr. Hilligje van’t Land</b> (Secretary General, International Association of Universities (IAU))</li> <li>• <b>Dr. Philip Vaughter</b> (Research Fellow, UNU-IAS)</li> <li>• <b>Prof. Ika Dewi Ana</b> (Vice Rector of Research and Community Services, Gadjah Mada University)</li> <li>• <b>Prof. Irfan Dwidya Prijambada</b> (Director of Community Services, Gadjah Mada University)</li> <li>• <b>Prof. Deepak Sharma</b> (Vice President for Academic Affairs, Asian Institute of Technology)</li> <li>• <b>Prof. Miki Sugimura</b> (Vice President for Global Academic Affairs, Professor of Faculty of Human Sciences, Sophia University)</li> </ul>
16:55- 17:00	<p><b>[Closing Session]</b></p> <p><b><u>Closing Remarks</u></b></p> <p><b>Dr. Akio Takemoto</b> (Programme Head, UNU-IAS)</p>

## **7. Webinar Participants**

- The webinar is open to public. In addition to ProSPER.Net member universities, educators, policymakers, students and beyond can participate in the webinar with free of charge but the pre-registration is required with no fee as well.

## **8. Registration**

- The webinar will be held using the Zoom platform. Registration should be completed via the following link by 23:59 (JST), Thursday, 14 October.

[https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_d1Gg6H\\_aTRSm32Qn6nH57g](https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_d1Gg6H_aTRSm32Qn6nH57g)