



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Address by Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO

on the occasion of the opening of the *International Conference on Higher Education for Sustainable Development: Higher Education Beyond 2014*

Nagoya University, Aichi, Japan, 9 November 2014

Excellency Mr Hakabun Shimomura, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan,

Excellency Mr Shigeo Kitamura, Vice-Minister of the Environment of Japan,

Dr Michinari Hamaguchi, President of Nagoya University,

Professor David Malone, Rector of the United Nations University,

Dear Professors, dear Students,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to be here today for this important conference.

Let me start by congratulating Nagoya University, as I know former Nagoya University Professor Dr Isamu Akasaki and Nagoya University Graduate School of Engineering Professor Dr Hiroshi Amano were awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics this year.

This pays tribute to the University's world-class standing in teaching and research, subjects we are discussing this morning.

It reflects the vision guiding the University, to create and share knowledge for the benefit of all.

The University's Charter puts forward the goal of cultivating "*courageous intellectuals endowed with powers to open up a new age.*"

I believe this same vision has brought us all here today.

I wish to thank first and foremost the United Nations University, the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science & Technology and Nagoya University for this initiative, with which UNESCO is pleased to partner.

In the words of the University's Charter, we must, indeed, all be *courageous* to *open up a new age*.

The stakes are high.

New challenges are emerging today that cross borders and policy lines.

There are rising costs of natural disasters.

There is the deepening impact of climate change.

The planet is under pressure, and we are reaching the limits of its boundaries – some say these boundaries have been crossed.

I believe humanity has entered a new age of limits, in terms of the planet, in terms of resources.

In this context, I believe we must make the most of the greatest renewable energy we have – this is, human ingenuity -- to craft solutions that are just, inclusive and sustainable.

This is UNESCO's vision – we can only build lasting peace and sustainable development if we begin with the rights and dignity of every woman and man, with their ability to aspire and become everything they can.

Far from resisting change, I believe we must embrace it together, to shape it in positive directions.

This is why education for sustainable development is so important.

Governments across the world are today negotiating a new global sustainable development agenda to follow 2015.

Sustainability will require changes in economic policies, in regulations and in laws.

But these will not be enough.

This was a key message of the 2012 *United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development* in Rio de Janeiro – the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable must be a single agenda.

Education is the way to connect the dots.

Sustainability requires changes in how we produce and consume, changes in our lifestyles.

It requires new ways of seeing the world, new ways of thinking about our responsibilities to each other and the planet, new ways of acting as global citizens.

This is why education is the bedrock for sustainability, because it can shape new values, skills and knowledge.

We cannot just build *green economies* -- we should build *green societies*.

This is the inspiration for the *United Nations Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014)*, sponsored by Japan and led by UNESCO.

We will take stock of its achievements at the *UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development*, and have the responsibility of looking forward, of adopting a new, ambitious agenda.

It is especially fitting to meet here, at Nagoya University, because I know the Asia-Pacific launch of the *UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development* took place in this same auditorium, in 2005.

Higher education is a key sector for taking forward education for sustainable development and science for sustainability.

The UN Decade has catalysed many inspiring initiatives, networks and practices – including, notably, the *Rio+20 Higher Education Sustainability Initiative*, with the United Nations University, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the UN Environment Programme, the UN Global Compact as well as UNESCO.

We can identify clearly the challenges arising – in inundated coastal communities, acidifying oceans, vanishing species, as well as accelerating urbanization, and rising pressures on food, water and energy resources.

We are gaining deeper understanding of the causes, consequences and responses required.

We must now bring these together, to open new possibilities for integrated economic vitality, social inclusion and environmental sustainability.

At Rio+20, Member States pledged to “*strengthen the science-policy interface as well as to foster international research collaboration on sustainable development.*” They agreed to promote education for sustainable development, to scale it beyond the end of the UN Decade.

Higher Education for Sustainable Development is essential at all levels – to mobilize research for decision-making and capacity-building, to catalyse synergies for integrated problem-solving approaches through science and engineering.

UNESCO has developed a Global Action Programme to move forward after the UN Decade.

This focuses on five priority action areas -- policy support, whole-institution approaches, educators, youth, and local communities.

Higher education institutions are important for each priority.

Universities can help us better understand sustainability challenges and inform more effective policy.

Higher education institutions are already pioneering whole-institution approaches, through green campus and sustainable university initiatives – they can help to lead this beyond the UN Decade.

Universities are key actors in training teachers and decision-makers, as well as for nurturing youth leaders.

Higher education institutions are also essential for meaningful change at the local level, providing expertise and support to local initiatives.

In a word, higher education institutions are essential platforms for innovative partnerships, to join together researchers, policy-makers, civil society and the private sector, to design and deliver knowledge and action for sustainable development.

This is one of the ambitions of the UNESCO Chairs programme, located in 134 countries -- we have a network of 17 ESD-affiliated Chairs, including one at Okayama University held by Professor Abe Hirofumi. Several of these Chairs have initiated extensive research and capacity-building initiatives over the course of the Decade.

Universities can bring disciplines together, to strengthen the science-policy-practice interface, to nurture the creativity all societies need today.

We see examples of this across the world – we must build on them, to shape a new commitment to sustainability at every level of society.

Across the world, 550 business schools have signed onto the *Principles for Responsible Management Education*, developed by the UN Global Compact.

These are the stakes of the World Conference that opens tomorrow, to help craft a global development agenda to follow 2015 that is ambitious enough to meet the

challenges we face, and to agree on concrete progress at the COP21 next year in Paris, following the Conference this December in Lima.

I am deeply convinced that education for sustainable development is essential to this global effort.

Thank you.