

# LINKING EDUCATION, TRANSDISCIPLINARITY

# AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

UNESCO Chairs for a sustainable future

2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> of December 2019 | Wuppertal, Germany



## Closing statement of the Conference “UNESCO Chairs for a sustainable future”

Wuppertal, December 04<sup>th</sup>, 2019

### Wuppertal Declaration

#### Sustainable Development through International and Transdisciplinary Cooperation in Science and Education

##### Recommendations of the UNESCO Chairs in Germany and their international partners

Today, there are more than 750 UNESCO chairs worldwide. They offer excellence in research, education and transfer through a wide diversity of approaches. UNESCO chairs are united in pursuing the core mission of the United Nations and their goals of global peace, justice and sustainable development. As think tanks, UNESCO chairs strive to shape national and local policy discourses.

Collectively, UNESCO chairs and related UNITWIN networks support transnational and continuous exchange of ideas, concepts and best practice cases. They partner in research and education among each other and with other institutions worldwide, across the Global South and the Global North. Through multilateral cooperation they strengthen inter- and transdisciplinary as well as intercultural perspectives in research, education, transfer, and exchange.

The expertise of UNESCO chairs and their unique profile is critical in confronting global challenges such as the climate emergency, loss of biodiversity, migration and inequality, as well as in providing contributions for the implementation of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, as well as sustainable development in a broader understanding.

For more than 25 years, the United Nations have recognized the significance of education for the success for sustainable development. Therefore, in the new UNESCO framework *Towards Achieving the SDGs (ESD for 2030)*, education is emphasized even more strongly as a key for unlocking all 17 SDGs. Arguably, this new framework will lead to an ever closer link between research, education and transfer. UNESCO chairs with their integrative approach to these fields can therefore make a sizeable contribution to the national and international success of the 2030 Agenda and ESD for 2030.

UNESCO chairs also facilitate the success of science, education and cultural policies, in particular policies for internationalizing and opening science and education, through science-policy-society dialogue across disciplinary, national and cultural borders and boundaries.

### *Our commitment*

As all recent meetings of UNESCO Chairs around the globe have demonstrated, UNESCO chairs are committed to fulfill their responsibility for the 2030 Agenda and beyond. Likewise, the German UNESCO chairs and their international partners, present in the 2019 Wuppertal Conference, fully commit to this responsibility and will address the responsibility in the future in an even more comprehensive and targeted way. They commit to increase efforts to contribute to global peace, justice and sustainable development.

In particular, they commit to further upscale and add quality to international academic cooperation, especially in North-South cooperation, to transdisciplinary education and science in formal, informal and non-formal settings, and to science-policy-society cooperation. They commit to the 2030 Agenda and ESD for 2030, as well as to their role in policies for internationalizing education and science and to the need for increased collaboration between the UNESCO chairs. They also commit to mobilize additional human and financial resources to complement their local responsibilities with a relevant international impact.

### *Our call for action*

Transdisciplinary education and science, responsible North-South cooperation, interaction with the arts and culture, as well as science-policy-society cooperation are more demanding in terms of time and resources than disciplinary scientific work. If such work is to be successful, public funding agencies should further adapt and upscale relevant funding regimes.

UNESCO chairs and the opportunities they provide for the 2030 Agenda should thus be strategically recognized, by national ministries, international organizations as well as funding agencies. In Germany, the same is true for the strategic reorientation in Germany's foreign education and cultural policy. Greater government support, both strategic and financial, would ensure even stronger results in building new international and transdisciplinary exchange forums, fostering academic freedom and ultimately aiding the achievement of the goals of the 2030 Agenda.

### *Declaration*

Therefore, the UNESCO chairs in Germany and their international partners issue the following declaration:

- The UNESCO chairs and UNITWIN networks aim to open their scientific work to the wider public, make their results openly available and engage more deeply with local stakeholders (e.g. by reaching out to civil society, enterprises and media). They intend to offer participatory ways of creating science-based knowledge, e.g. by implementing formats of citizen science.
- The UNESCO chairs strive to be reliable partners on equal terms for other academic institutions in the world as well as stakeholders beyond academia. Initiating new and innovative cooperation frameworks is a core element in fostering sustainable development.
- The UNESCO chairs aim to extend their leadership and their position as role models in living the United Nations' spirit of peace and inclusivity. Therefore, they will expand their commitment for further partnership between the Global South and Global North by exchanging knowledge, solutions and best practices.

- The UNESCO chairs aim to extend their active role in the realization of the 2030 Agenda and its sustainability goals, in particular in becoming flagship hubs for sharing and exchanging best practices.
- The UNESCO chairs aim at reaching out to and including youth more fully, in particular in education for sustainable development (ESD), both in formal, informal and non-formal settings and at adapting innovative teaching formats, such as digital formats (e.g. open educational resources) and positive narratives. They also aim at strengthening the visibility of these approaches, including through social media.
- The UNESCO chairs call for reforming academic reward systems that acknowledge the requirements of trans- and interdisciplinary work and its value in contribution to the sustainable development goals and that also place a higher value on such work in determining academic achievement.
- The UNESCO chairs aim at addressing a broader audience, making their voices heard and engaging more actively in policy discourses to foster policy development, in particular as regards sustainability and ESD.
- The UNESCO chairs call upon their governments, including the German government, to draw upon UNESCO chairs as think tanks and to promote their work through strategic as well as financial resources.
- The UNESCO chairs call for a further strengthening of the commitment of their governments, including the German government, to using multilateral approaches in their foreign policies for a rules-based multilateral global order.