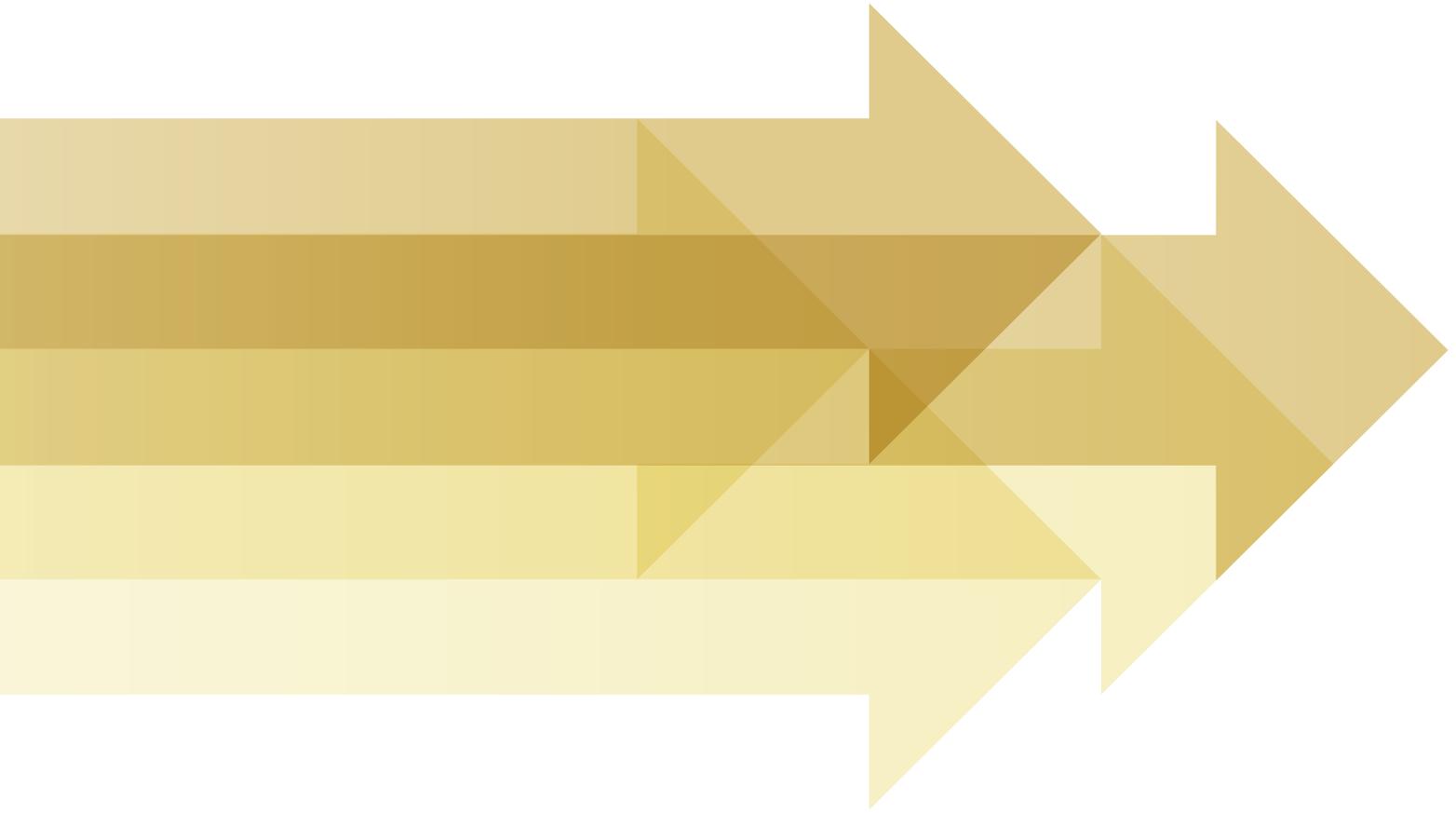




# United Nations University

## Strategic Plan 2011–2014



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# INTRODUCTION

## 1 THE UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY

As our planet gets more and more depleted of its riches, some bold moves are necessary if we want to assure that coming generations have, in their entirety, as much a chance to live a decent life in peace, in freedom, in safety and in good health as the privileged half of humanity has it now. In particular, the philosophy that the well-being of humanity depends crucially on permanent economic growth has to be revised: we cannot go on forever with the kind of growth we have become used to, growth that is mainly made possible by the extraction of energies and precious materials from our planet. We need a new notion of growth, a notion that is based much more on the renewability of what is being used up, consumed or destroyed.

One of the most precious and renewable resources we have is our brain, and one of the major investments all people on the globe will have to be empowered to make is a much better use of human brain power. This means that all people must have unlimited access to a high-quality education, and scientific knowledge and research have to be made available for decision makers worldwide.

It was with the intention to make an essential step towards this goal that U Thant in 1969 proposed the creation of a university of and for the United Nations. His proposal was taken up by the General Assembly, which in 1973 established the United Nations University (UNU) as a truly global institution of academic research and education that generates and shares scientific knowledge and strengthens capacities relevant to promoting human security and development, in particular in developing countries.

As the academic institution within the United Nations system, the University contributes directly to the advancement of knowledge relevant to the role and work of the United Nations as well as to its application in the formulation of sound principles, policies, strategies and programmes for action. With intellectual independence, in particular in the selection of topics and the dissemination of results, guaranteed through its Charter, the University can make these contributions with objectivity and integrity, and in a problem-oriented manner essential for dealing with pressing issues of global concern.

## 2 THE MISSION

*The UN University's mission is to contribute, through collaborative research and education, dissemination, and advisory services, to efforts to resolve the pressing global problems of human survival, development and welfare that are the concern of the United Nations, its Peoples and Member States.*

In pursuing this mission, the University will conduct research on problems of relevance to the United Nations and its Member States, offer postgraduate programmes that prepare people for science-based work in the United Nations or Governments of Member States, and function as a think tank for the United Nations and its Member States. In doing so, it pays due attention to the social sciences and the humanities as well as the natural sciences. UNU will play the role of a bridge between the United Nations and the international academic community, and it will serve as a platform for global and local dialogue and creative new ideas. Through postgraduate teaching and research, UNU will contribute to capacity building, particularly in developing countries.

### 3 THE VISION

*The UN University aspires to be a world-class international think tank and research, teaching and capacity development institution that addresses the needs of present and future generations to live a decent life, in peace, in freedom, in safety and in good health. It seeks to provide global leadership on aspects of peace, development and sustainability, including governance, global public policy, gender equality, poverty reduction, global health, climate change, natural resources, energy and new technologies, with a special emphasis on collaboration and dialogue between developed and developing countries as well as between different civilizations. It serves the United Nations and its Member States with state-of-the-art research and with accumulated knowledge in these areas. It aims to be a postgraduate institution that attracts top researchers, teachers and students alike.*

**The UN University is special...**

The UN University will expand its presence in developing countries and countries in transition in order to address the increasing need for advanced research and education related directly to pressing global problems that manifest themselves most prominently in these countries. Through its academic activities, the University will build up partnerships in research and teaching (Twin Institutes, see section 1.1 on page 5) while at the same time strengthening existing institutions of higher learning in developing and transitional countries as a means to enhance the capacities for self-reliant human and social development.

*Like* many other ambitious academic institutions around the world, the UN University will be a widely recognized international postgraduate research and teaching institution, best known for:

- its emphasis on ensuring the highest possible quality in its research, teaching and academic support services;
- its strict adherence to the methods and tools of social and natural sciences and of engineering;
- its high ethical standards, including integrity, trust, tolerance and acceptance of rights as well as obligations;
- its striving to implement the principles of gender balance;
- its spirit of cooperation, collegiality and a dedication to creating a sense of community;
- its equity and openness in access to UNU research, teaching, capacity development and dissemination;
- its intellectual vitality and openness;
- its academic freedom and autonomy, with commensurate accountability; and
- its social responsibility and the environmental sustainability of its own operations.

*Unlike* most other universities, due to its special mission it is also true that the UN University will be *different* in many aspects, such as:

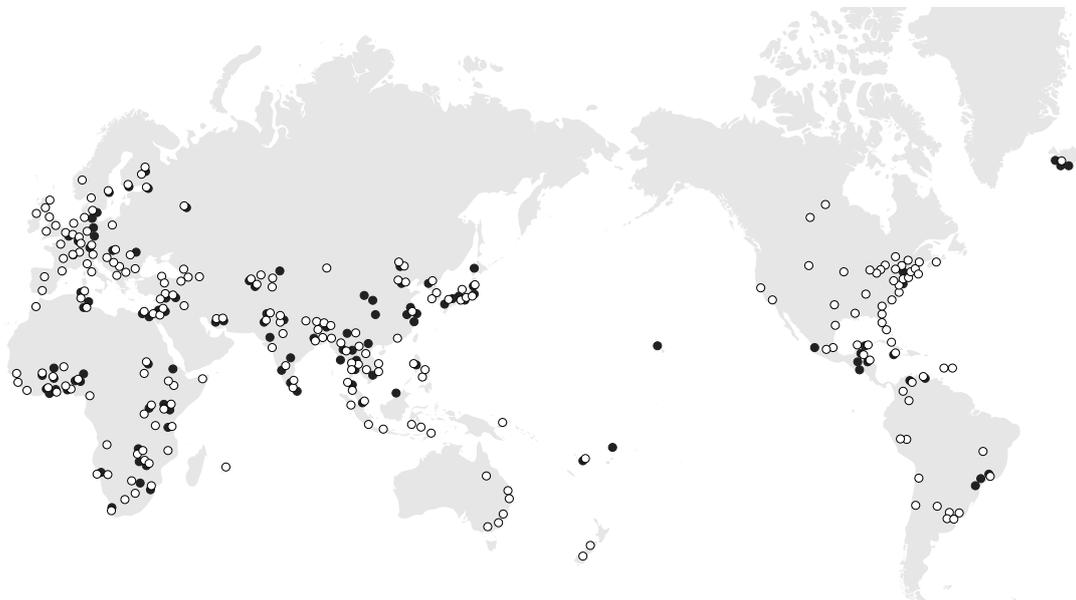
- its global structure, with 15 institutes and programmes in 13 countries;
- its being an institution of the United Nations, and therefore its close collaboration with many UN and governmental offices in research and in placing students for internships and the like;
- its acting as a think tank for the United Nations and its Member States;
- its ability to bring in experts from other UN agencies and from the political/diplomatic world;
- its collaboration with the best universities in many countries, developed and developing;

- its focus on problems and themes, not on disciplines, and its problem-focused structure;
- its high relevance to the problems of sustainability, in particular of developing countries and the United Nations system;
- its focus on user needs, both in research and in teaching; and
- its efforts to bridge the gaps between the developed and the developing world by building partnerships in research and in teaching (see section 1.1, Twin Institutes, on page 5).

It is the totality of all these special aspects that allow the UN University to exploit its comparative advantages as both a United Nations organization built on the principle of partnership between the different parts of the world as well as a high-level research and teaching institution emphasizing a systems-oriented, interdisciplinary, problem-solving approach in its work.

**FIGURE 1: RESEARCH AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT**

Distribution of UNU's research [black] and capacity development [white] activities worldwide.



**FIGURE 2: INSTITUTES**

UNU's institutes worldwide [black]. UNU Centre, Tokyo (Headquarters), and Centre units in Paris, Bonn, Kuala Lumpur and New York [white].



# STRATEGIC GOALS AND MEASURES

The UN University will work systematically towards the realization of its vision by setting well-defined goals and taking specific measures to achieve these goals. These university-wide goals are organized into three categories:

1. Enhancing core activities, including research, teaching and capacity development, and dissemination and sharing of knowledge
2. Strengthening communications and outreach
3. Renewing structures and improving quality

## **1 ENHANCING CORE ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING RESEARCH, TEACHING AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT, AND DISSEMINATION AND SHARING OF KNOWLEDGE**

One of the major sources of comparative advantage of UN University research is that UNU takes a holistic view of the complex processes that affect human security and development. This is in line with the UNU Charter, which stipulates that the work of the University should be multidisciplinary and problem-oriented.

UNU teaching and capacity development entails the development of individual, group and institutional capabilities for self-sustained learning, for the generation of new knowledge and/or technology, for the accumulation of knowledge, or for the implementation of development activities. These capacities are crucial to the development efforts of developing and transitional countries as well as to the effectiveness of United Nations programmes. UNU aims at a multiplier effect by focusing on training the trainers, research leaders and policymakers and decision makers while at the same time generating new knowledge on the most pressing global issues and transmitting and sharing this knowledge directly to and with young people through high-quality teaching and capacity development programmes, including distance education.

The main goal of UNU's dissemination and knowledge-sharing activities is to get the right knowledge to the people who need it most, in a timely manner and in a form that is most useful to them. The themes and topics that UNU deals with are of concern to a large portion of UN Member States and are of global relevance or are highly relevant to a global issue. With its unique position as a university within the United Nations system, UNU undertakes a wide range of knowledge generation and accumulation, knowledge transfer and sharing as well as knowledge application/management activities: problem-driven research, foresight and policy studies, capacity development, networking/collaboration with external partners, and dissemination and outreach.

### **1.1 Twin Institutes**

**Goal:**

*Strengthen UNU's presence in developing and transitional countries and intensify research and teaching interaction with developed countries.*

The focus of attention lies — as it does for the UN system as a whole — on the developing world where the development needs are greatest. As figure 1 shows, the main focus of UNU's research

and capacity development activities lies in the developing countries. However, most of UNU's institutional representations are located in the developed countries, as shown in figure 2.

This dichotomy needs to be addressed in order to make UNU's operations more effective, efficient, culturally adapted and sustainable. A stronger representation of UNU in developing countries and in countries in transition will also create a stronger sense of ownership of its various activities and outputs in the different regions.

**Measure:**

Build up the University's presence and outreach in the developing parts of the world by introducing the "Twin Institute" concept.

**Definition of a Twin Institute:**

A Twin Institute is an ordinary institute or programme<sup>1</sup> with two (in exceptional cases, three or maximally four) different locations, one of them being in a developed country and the other one being in a developing country. In each location, there is a group of researchers, teachers and students (called a Twin or a Twinning Partner). The two Twins will develop a joint research and teaching agenda. As a rule of thumb, they will spend more than 50% of their time on joint projects. The students, in the course of a programme, will usually spend time in both locations, while the researchers will meet regularly for exchanging ideas, and they might want to organize at least one joint scientific meeting per year. In addition, UNU's e-learning facilities and capacities will be a crucial tool for a resource-effective way to share and build up educational programmes and curriculums. In this way, UNU's capacity development in the developing world will be strengthened, and the scholars in the developed countries will be better versed to respond to very specific conditions.

The Twin Institute structure will also strengthen the academic basis of the developing host country. "Brain drain" is an unlikely consequence, since the reputation and scientific quality of the groups in the developing and in the developed countries for the two twinning partners will eventually become equal at a high level.

**Financial base of a Twin Institute:**

For the basic funding of a Twin Institute, the cost of the twin in the developed country has to be covered by its host country. For the twin in the developing country, it is crucial that a certain share of the funding (at least 30%) is derived from its host country too. There should be no part of an institute in a country whose government is not interested in making at least a partial contribution. The remaining financial resources have to come from research and teaching projects that are formulated by the two twins jointly and that are submitted to funding agencies or other donors in the developed country or elsewhere.

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<sup>1</sup> Institute or programme as used herein is synonymous with the term "research and training centre or programme" as defined in the UNU Charter.

**Time line for set-up:**

The time line for establishing Twin Institutes is two years of a preparation phase (2009–2010), followed by a two-year set up phase (2011–2012). Good progress in setting up the twinning partner should be achieved by the end of 2012. However, there is a need for flexibility in relation to the envisaged time lines.

**Location of a Twinning Partner:**

It is highly desirable that the new twinning partner is situated near an existing university or another academic institution of high reputation with people interested in having the UNU institute nearby, possibly on the same campus.

**Creating a Twinning Partner on the basis of existing cooperation:**

Probably the most efficient — but not the most direct — approach to twinning is to capitalize on existing partnerships in order to spawn a new entity that will initially operate as an affiliated programme/institute. The context of the existing collaboration will set the basis for, but will not limit the scope of, the affiliated programme to be created. Over time, this affiliated programme/institute could gradually become a fully-fledged Twin of the existing institute with a shared educational curriculum, joint research programmes and tightly linked (or common) budgets.

**Creating a Twinning Partner from scratch:**

A more direct, but time-consuming, route to twinning is the creation of an entirely new Twinning Partner without pre-existing links to an implementing partner such as another university or research facility. This involves the acquisition of one or several funding partners in the developing country, such as a ministry, an endowment fund, private industry, etc. In addition, the twin in the developed country or its direct donor(s) also needs to commit funding to the other Twinning Partner. In this twinning approach, the primary liaison is established between donors in both countries and the UNU institute in the developed country. However, to ensure sustainability and a sense of ownership, links should also be created with an existing research infrastructure in the developing country and with the government. New institutes that are currently under discussion will have to be conceived of as Twin Institutes from the outset, but it is not required that both twins be built up simultaneously.

**Joint governance:**

Twin Institutes ideally will have a joint programme and budget, a joint strategic plan, two co-directors and one advisory board.

**Goal:**

*Strengthen UNU's activities in developing countries through networking.*

**Measures:**

- Build on existing UNU networks and profit from the establishment of Twin Institute partnerships to create new networks;
- Strengthen collaboration with academic and research institutions and other relevant stakeholders, including United Nations organizations located in developing countries;
- Network with local institutions to respond to local needs and develop capacities; and
- Place renewed emphasis on project development and fund-raising, in particular for projects in Africa.

## 1.2 Postgraduate Programmes

The UNU Charter stipulates that “The United Nations University shall be an international community of scholars engaged in research, postgraduate training and the dissemination of knowledge...” (Article 1, paragraph 1). Since its establishment, UNU has been engaged in different kinds of teaching activities. It has been offering many programmes of shorter or longer duration for which it issues a certificate. Members of UNU have also been engaged in master’s or Ph.D. programmes of other universities, but these programmes were never considered as being offered by UNU itself. This is one of the main reasons why UNU was unable to develop a worldwide reputation as a leading postgraduate institution.

### Goal:

*Improve teaching and capacity development and their relevance and recognition.*

### Measures:

- Build on existing joint master’s and Ph.D. programmes undertaken by UNU institutes, and initiate new joint-degree programmes with high-level university partners;
- Award UNU master’s and Ph.D. degrees according to unified standards and formats. They will be signed by the Rector of UNU;
- Award either a double degree with the partner university or a joint degree; and
- Formalize the accreditation of degrees via the UNU Council (see below)

### Remarks:

- On 21 December 2009, at its 64th session, the UN General Assembly approved<sup>2</sup> two amendments (additions) to the Charter of the United Nations University:  
Article I, paragraph 8:  
*8. The University shall grant and confer master’s degrees and doctorates, diplomas, certificates and other academic distinctions under conditions laid down for that purpose in the statutes by the Council of the University.*  
and Article IX, paragraph 2bis:  
*2bis. The costs of the postgraduate degree programmes of the University, as referred to in article I, paragraph 8, above may also be met from tuition fees and related charges.*
- A joint degree means one degree given jointly by two or more academic institutions whereas double degree means that each partner university awards a degree. In the beginning of this type of collaboration, for legalistic reasons, it often is not possible to offer joint degrees if one of the partners is a “foreign” institution. In that case, a double degree is the solution to the problem. It is probable that within a few years most countries will allow for joint degrees due to the pressure created by increasing globalization of the higher education sector.

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<sup>2</sup> (A/RES/64/225).

### **1.3 Focusing knowledge production, broadening knowledge accumulation, strengthening knowledge dissemination and sharing**

Given the relatively small size of UNU as an academic institution, in order to maintain a high level of quality, it is essential to focus its activities in both research and in teaching. On the other hand, in order to play its role as a think tank in some areas that are crucial for the UN and for the development of the emerging countries, UNU should accumulate knowledge and at the same time improve its knowledge dissemination and knowledge sharing.

**Goal:**

*Develop more synergies in research within UNU and a higher impact of the research results. At the same time, be prepared to act as a knowledgeable think tank in some of the major areas of interest to the United Nations system.*

**Measure:**

Identify and implement selected areas of focus that capitalize on existing strengths within the University and for which resources are available or obtainable, and at the same time broaden knowledge accumulation in these focus areas.

**Goal:**

*Strengthen knowledge dissemination and knowledge sharing.*

**Measures:**

- Build into the programme/project planning process a clear priority for knowledge management, dissemination and sharing;
- Make use of new and innovative publishing and dissemination techniques and effective vehicles for targeted dissemination and specific policy advice;
- Adopt a university-wide approach to online learning;
- Enhance external communication and global and local outreach activities; and
- Give a clear emphasis to high-quality outputs, including peer-reviewed journal articles, monographs and policy and research briefs.

**Goal:**

*Emphasize user-focused, high-impact research and teaching: being leaders rather than followers.*

**Measure:**

Give added emphasis to user-focused and/or user-driven research that could have a direct impact on problems that affect larger numbers of people in developing and transitional countries. Though basic research is vital for the further development of any modern society, this is not the prime focus of UNU.

**Goal:**

*Strengthen the mutual inspiration of teaching, research and think-tank activities.*

**Measure:**

Ensure that most of the personnel of UNU institutes/programmes are engaged in or contribute to all three primary functions of the University: research, teaching and think-tank activities.

## 1.4 Systems approach

Today's problems connected with sustainability are too complex to be dealt with in a discipline-by-discipline manner. In particular, the division between social and natural sciences is often in the way of a thorough understanding of critical problems. What is called for is a "systems" approach, making substantial use of modern modelling techniques and of high-speed computers.

### Goal:

*Understand and master today's problems in peace, development and sustainability in an all-embracing and holistic manner.*

### Measures:

- Replace a disciplinary approach with a systems approach in close collaboration between the natural and social sciences;
- Stress interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary as well as multicultural and intercultural approaches in UNU research, bringing together the social and natural sciences, humanities and engineering. Organize research and teaching along concrete problems rather than along disciplinary lines; and
- Ensure that research groups contain both social and natural scientists or people who have expertise in both or have access to such expertise where applicable.

## 1.5 Online learning/education

Especially in developing countries, many gifted young people do not have access to university-level classroom teaching because they cannot afford to travel to places where there are universities or are unable to free themselves for the precise times when regular university courses are offered.

### Goal:

*Make available classroom teaching to people who do not have easy access.*

### Measures:

- Promote the virtual university concept by creating a large number of e-learning components and by participating in existing networks, such as those under the Asia Pacific Initiative, among others;
- Strengthen collaboration university-wide in e-learning development and delivery;
- Develop an incentive structure that encourages researchers to make available content for use in e-learning course modules; and
- Explore the possibilities for serving as a key international clearinghouse for e-learning courses on sustainability.

## 2 STRENGTHENING COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

One of the key roles of the UN University is to serve as an international community of scholars. This requires the University to be open, to share information and to extend the reach of its programmes and its dissemination activities to a global audience. The UNU Charter stipulates that “as a world-wide system of research and training centres and programmes, the University will have its location at the site of each centre or programme”(Article X, paragraph 1). This presents a challenge for the University to be invested in its host countries and, in particular, to be well rooted in the academic and policymaking communities in its host countries.

The UN University, as a voluntarily funded United Nations organization, depends heavily on support made available by governments, bilateral and multilateral development assistance agencies, foundations and other public and private sector sources. The UN University Endowment Fund provides a minimum assured income to support long-term planning and programming for most parts of the University system. Nevertheless, the University remains too dependent on annual contributions made available by hosting governments. There is a clear need to enhance the financial base of the University and to diversify the sources of financing for its work.

### 2.1 UNU’s connection and contributions to its key stakeholders

The United Nations system is a key constituency and stakeholder for UNU research, teaching and knowledge dissemination. The quality and relevance of UNU’s activities could be further strengthened by enhancing existing collaborative programmes and by initiating new cooperative work with different sister organizations within the United Nations family. The University also needs to invest in cooperation and connection with other academic institutions of high repute and with research organizations, foundations and corporations as well as with NGOs and other stakeholders from civil society.

#### Goal:

*Strengthen collaboration with other United Nations organizations, mechanisms, the private sector and civil society.*

#### Measures:

- Give emphasis to cooperation and joint initiatives with UNESCO, including the UNESCO Chairs Programme;
- Strengthen cooperation with other parts of the United Nations, including in particular UNEP, UNITAR, the substantive departments of the UN Secretariat as well as the secretariats of the multilateral environmental agreements and the Bretton Woods institutions;
- Assure UNU participation in UN committee work on issues relevant for UNU;
- Extend and build up joint activities based on effective functional links with strategic UN partners;
- Ensure more efficient and effective dissemination of UNU outputs and outcomes within the UN system, including strengthening and refocusing UNU offices in New York (UN) and in Paris (UNESCO);
- Motivate the ambassadors of UNU host countries to act as promoters of UNU in the diplomatic corps, most importantly in New York and in Paris; and

- Develop entry points for the involvement of private sector entities and civil society organizations, in particular NGOs, to participate in UNU public events as well as in UNU activities when appropriate.

## **2.2 Roots in the host countries**

The UN University is privileged to enjoy the steadfast generosity and support of the hosting countries for its Headquarters and each of its institutes and programmes. This denotes a special relationship between the University and its host countries. The University needs to ensure that through its activities the host countries derive benefit from the presence of UNU in their territories. To ensure that maximum benefits accrue to its host countries, the University must strengthen its connection and involvement with key stakeholders in each of its host countries.

### **Goal:**

*Strengthen the presence in and interaction with UNU host countries.*

### **Measures:**

- Enhance communication, outreach and dissemination with host governments, academic institutions and civil society; and
- Further strengthen knowledge sharing and outreach activities in the University's host countries.

## **2.3 Networking with leading industries**

The UN University has established some collaborative activities with partners in different economic and industrial sectors. Projects related to environmental monitoring, food and nutrition, and risk and vulnerability assessment currently form the basis for such partnerships. Selected UNU research initiatives would benefit from a stronger connection to leading companies in different industrial sectors. Such cooperation can also be seen as a means to begin to heighten interest in UNU's research as well as to augment support from private sector entities for UNU activities.

### **Goal:**

*Forge collaborative relationships with leading industries.*

### **Measures:**

- Develop new contacts and cooperation with key industry partners working or involved in areas related to UNU's research agenda; and
- Identify potential industry partners who could receive information on UNU research programmes and who could be invited to attend UNU conferences, workshops and seminars.

## 2.4 Consolidation and branding

As an academic institution within the United Nations system, the UN University has a unique “brand” that conveys an image of neutrality and a distinct international profile. As a think tank for the United Nations, UNU must ensure that its “brand” is supported by a reputation for high-quality research, for the relevance of its research outcomes and for its credibility. As a system of institutes and programmes, the University must also present a unified brand which can help to enhance the University’s worldwide visibility.

### Goal:

*Build and protect the UN University brand.*

### Measures:

- Make better use of current and former UNU Council members and Institute/Programme Advisory Board members to enhance knowledge and understanding of UNU goals and activities;
- Enhance coherence and cogency within the UN University by promoting joint research and teaching between different parts of the University;
- Harmonize the visual identity, web presentation and public information activities and materials;
- Give emphasis to an all-embracing UN University label rather than a collection of independent institutes;
- Identify ways to give due recognition to the contributions to UNU research and teaching of its Associated Institutions and collaborating partners; and
- Continue to select highly regarded academic institutions to be designated as UNU Associated Institutions on the basis of a joint programme of research and/or teaching.

## 2.5 Internal and external communication

The UN University faces a number of challenges as a decentralized organization of research and teaching institutes and programmes. Among these is maintaining good communication within the University system while at the same time presenting a consistent and continuous stream of communication to its key stakeholders in the public and private sectors and with United Nations Member States. Strengthening cooperation and communication among UNU institutes will have a beneficial effect on the cogency of the University as a whole.

To reach its external audiences, UNU needs to upgrade its communications methods and tools, continue to refine its target markets, and tailor its outputs accordingly. The University is focused on engaging scholars, practitioners, policymakers and the general public through a combination of discourse and dialogue. Each has different interests and concerns, and these frequently require different messages and communication methods. Therefore, UNU will increasingly focus on contextualizing its outputs in order to convey more effectively the benefits of its activities in terms most relevant to its audiences. UNU will continue to use various languages in order to broaden its ability to communicate appropriately.

**Goal:**

*Improve UNU's capacity to communicate.*

**Measures:**

- Improve external public information and outreach activities in a targeted manner, emphasizing the use of the Internet, social media and new technologies;
- Facilitate and give emphasis to internal communication and information sharing;
- Ensure that all UNU units have and make use of video-conferencing equipment and capacities;
- Strengthen existing communications staffing and funding;
- Appoint a Head of Communications for the whole UNU with a seat in New York
- Link up existing communications staff among the different parts of the University;
- Promote staff exchange and dialogue; and
- Implement a Global Office ICT Platform to harmonize and enhance the use of ICT throughout the University.

## **2.6 Mobilization of additional resources**

A key constraint to the further development of the UN University remains its limited human and financial resources. While significant support is being generated for specific research and teaching initiatives, the University must strengthen its capacity to mobilize and leverage new and unrestricted contributions from governments, development assistance agencies, foundations and private sector sources. The specialized and decentralized nature of the UNU system presents specific challenges for developing and operating a professionalized development department that is increasingly a part of most universities. It will be crucial for the UN University to strengthen its fund-raising capacity in the near and long term to support the new Twin Institute initiative as well as the deployment of UNU postgraduate degree programmes and the availability of scholarships.

**Goal:**

*Expand and diversify the University's financial base.*

**Measures:**

- Make renewed efforts to increase the level of financial support from host governments;
- Mobilize and allocate resources to further strengthen the UNU Development Office, with its seat in New York, in its efforts to systematize and coordinate fund-raising university-wide;
- Generate additional capital contributions for UNU as a whole and its existing institutes and programmes, and ensure that all new institutes and programmes have a sound financial base prior to their establishment; and
- Mobilize new un-earmarked capital contributions to assist the Rector in setting strategic priorities for the University worldwide and supporting novel initiatives with uncertain outcomes.

## 2.7 Connecting up with UNU Alumni

A largely untapped resource for UNU remains the students and participants of its teaching and training programmes. While some efforts have been made by individual institutes or programmes to maintain contact with their alumni, a systematic effort to maintain contact with or to reconnect up to UNU alumni is needed for the future. An alumni organization will be increasingly important as UNU begins to award its own postgraduate degrees.

### Goal:

*Coordinate and maintain contact with UNU alumni as a resource for the future.*

### Measures:

- Establish a university-wide Alumni Association;
- Bring together existing databases and lists of former students, fellows, participants, staff and supporters as the basis for a UNU Alumni Association;
- Develop a systematic approach to create and nurture a self-sustaining alumni network/association; and
- Initiate a periodic newsletter directed to UNU alumni as a way to maintain contact and to engage alumni.

## 3 RENEWING STRUCTURES AND IMPROVING QUALITY

The UN University strives to have an impact that is larger than its available human and financial resources. This calls for focused efforts and the allocation of resources in key areas to exploit the University's comparative advantage. To do so, the University will address itself to a number of key strategic issues affecting the quality of its work and the outreach of its academic activities. Among these will be addressing the current asymmetry in the global presence of the University and enhancing connections and contributions to the United Nations system. The University will pursue collaboration instead of competition and strengthen ties to other leading universities.

The human resources of the University are its greatest asset. UNU must ensure that the University's "environment" promotes individual and team success and supports a community that values inclusion, diversity and open perspectives.

### 3.1 UNU postgraduate degrees

As a global university, UNU must ensure that its postgraduate programmes are of the highest quality and relevance for young people entering careers in universities, international organizations, and the public and private sectors. This will require that attention is given to ensuring that the quality and relevance of such programmes are assured and acknowledged academically and at the international level.

### Goal:

*Ensure that UNU postgraduate programmes are globally recognized.*

### Measures:

- Employ a rigorous system of quality assurance;
- Develop the internal mechanism and infrastructure within the UNU Centre for managing the award of degrees by different parts of the UNU system; and
- Propose to the UNU Council an accreditation system that is operated under the responsibility of the Council for all UNU degree programmes.

### 3.2 Quality assurance and quality improvement framework

The UN University has an important mandate to function as a think tank for the United Nations system. For UNU to play this role, it must make continuous efforts to assure the quality of its research and teaching programmes and the efficacy of its knowledge dissemination and sharing activities. UNU strives to establish its postgraduate degree programmes in full concurrence with the mandate of the University to generate and teach policy-relevant science in a problem-focused and interdisciplinary context. These features will be brought into new joint degree schemes, but will also characterize degree programmes UNU will launch on its own.

**Goal:**

*Make UNU teaching and research trustworthy and highly regarded.*

**Measures:**

- Develop for the whole university a modular system of quality control for all research, teaching, capacity development and dissemination activities;
- Build on and enhance the existing institutional quality control and evaluation systems;
- Streamline administrative and decision-making processes to deliver services at least cost to the University system; and
- Explain the quality control system to present and potential future donors and to the relevant entities in the UN system.

### 3.3 UNU human resources

In order for the UN University to deliver high-quality teaching as a part of its new postgraduate programmes, attention will need to be given to ensuring that the University's human resources management policies are in line with the need for continuity and stability in the teaching faculty and support personnel for such programmes. More generally, to guarantee that the University's crucial think tank function and delivery of postgraduate degree programmes are implemented efficaciously, UNU must take steps to attract and develop the highest possible calibre of administrative and support staffing.

**Goal:**

*Provide stability and continuity for UNU's postgraduate programmes and research and for advising students.*

**Measures:**

- Review and upgrade existing hiring practices to facilitate the development and implementation of new postgraduate programmes;
- Revise the existing personnel policy to allow for longer term appointments for senior research and teaching staff in order to ensure stability and continuity in UNU academic programmes. At the level of postdocs and other junior academic staff there should be a reasonable turnover — promotion to a senior position has to be the exception;
- Arrange training to enhance the human resources management skills of managers;
- Develop a fair performance evaluation system for all UNU personnel that emphasizes quality; and
- Create incentives for staff to conduct research and teaching activities directly in developing countries.

### 3.4 Gender balance within UNU

The University needs to make strong and concerted efforts to ensure gender balance at all levels in its research, teaching and dissemination activities and in its academic support services.

**Goal:**

*Give emphasis in recruitment and human resources management policies to ensuring gender balance and equity within the UNU system.*

**Measures:**

- Take stock of the current gender balance in student populations, academic and supporting staffing, and senior management throughout the UNU system;
- Review existing policies and guidelines to ensure that gender equity is clearly articulated as a priority; and
- Make renewed and strong efforts to achieve gender balance in academic and senior management staffing throughout the medium-term period and beyond.

### 3.5 Environmentally sustainable operations

The UN University will continue to focus its research and teaching programmes on issues related to sustainability. As a United Nations organization promoting education for sustainable development and carrying out research in the area of sustainability science, it is incumbent on the University to carry out its activities and to manage its global footprint in a sustainable manner.

**Goal:**

*Develop and implement a university-wide environmental management plan.*

**Measures:**

- Broaden the uptake of the current environmental management plan in Tokyo and Yokohama to other UNU institutes and programmes worldwide; and
- Undertake a comprehensive environmental assessment of the UNU Headquarters Building in Tokyo and implement measures to improve the sustainable operation of the building.

## 4 SETTING PRIORITIES

Although all the goals and corresponding measures discussed above are crucial for a positive future development of the University, they are not all at the same level of urgency. It is important to identify a small number of high-level priorities. This was achieved by selecting two major topics each year starting in 2009 and adding two more priority areas each year. So far, these high-level priorities have been:

2009 • Twin Institutes

- Postgraduate Programmes

2010 • Quality Assurance

- Communications (Preparing for an Office of Communications)

2011 • Development Office: Fund-raising

- Coherence of UNU (from a Federation of Institutes to a Federal Institution)

2012 • Preparing for Rio+20 and post-2015 Millennium Development Goals

- Personnel Policy

# ACADEMIC PROGRAMME

## 1 TOWARDS GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The academic programme of UNU is determined by its mission:

[.....] to contribute, through collaborative research and education, dissemination and advisory services, to efforts to resolve the pressing global problems of human survival, development and welfare that are the concern of the United Nations, its Peoples and Member States.

The main goal is to contribute to global sustainable development, which is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Brundtland Report, 1987). All activities under the University's academic programme are descriptively categorized using topics of focus.

The academic activities of the UN University are problem-oriented. As such, each topic of focus identifies a global pressing problem which is currently being addressed, or is intended to be addressed in the future, by the University's institutes and programmes. Moreover, in order to rationalize these topics of focus in a way that allows the University to present its academic programme in an organized manner, each topic has been assigned to one of five broader thematic clusters. The following list is not meant to be a complete listing, nor is its attribution in any way unique.

## 2 UNU THEMATIC CLUSTERS

Peace, Security and Human Rights

- Peacebuilding and peacekeeping
- Conflict resolution and human security
- Fostering dialogue among civilizations, religions and cultures
- Human rights and ethics
- Gender equity and mainstreaming

Development Governance

- Growth and economic development
- Alleviating poverty and inequalities
- Enhancing educational capacities
- Global public policy, good governance
- Fair trade
- Processes and consequences of regional integration and cooperation
- Leadership, management and entrepreneurship

Population and Health

- Global health
- Safe water and sanitation
- Food and nutrition for human and social development
- Combating HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, etc.
- Population changes and migration

Global Change and Sustainable Development

- Climate change – adaptation and mitigation
- Ecological health and biodiversity
- New risk and vulnerabilities
- Sustainable land, agriculture and natural resources management
- Green economy

#### Science, Technology and Society

- Science, technology and innovation
- Sustainable energy futures
- Sustainable urban futures
- Sustainable housing and construction

The five thematic clusters largely represent a continuing focus for UNU academic activities since the mid-1980s. They were derived taking account of the areas of research and capacity development as approved by the UNU Council over time within the University's Medium-term Perspective documents, within the Academic Programme and Budget documents and, subsequently, within UNU's Strategic Plans since 1997. The clusters are interlinked and interdependent in the sense that none can be fulfilled without taking account of the others (i.e., interdisciplinary and systems approaches are necessary).

"Sustainability" is the overarching theme without which none of the pressing global problems of human survival, development and welfare should be addressed; that is, in a manner that enables present and future generations to live a life in decency, in safety, in good health and in freedom. Sustainability can be addressed through a series of topics of focus which relate to the research, teaching, capacity development and dissemination activities carried out within the UNU system. UNU activities deal with several different but related topics of focus as the University adopts a multidisciplinary approach in conducting its think tank, research, teaching and capacity development activities.

### **3 CHOOSING THE FOCUS AREAS**

The above list suggests that the topics are interlinked and that in many cases only a systems approach, involving social sciences as much as natural and engineering sciences, can lead towards a solution. This will be a major criterion for UNU when it defines the areas in which it wants to be active in research and in teaching as well as when it comes to the definition of the focus areas of UNU's institutes and programmes or to the nomination of new scientific collaborators. Ideally, every institute/programme should be able to consider simultaneously social science as much as natural and engineering science aspects of a given problem.

The above list defines the frame within which UNU puts together its academic programme. It is clear that choices have to be made: not all of the problems can be covered, nor to the depth that is necessary. Currently, only two of 26 topics of focus (fair trade and sustainable housing and construction) are not covered by any existing UNU institute or programme; coverage will depend on efforts to establish new UNU institutes or programmes in these important areas during the period covered by the Strategic Plan.

Special emphasis will have to be put on problem areas to which more than one UNU institute/programme, and also research groups of neighbouring institutions (universities), can contribute.

Though UNU is a global institution and preferably works on problems that are global in nature and in their impact, special emphasis will be given to questions relating to the developing world: to problem solving and capacity development in developing countries and in countries in transition. This should not exclude problems that are of particular interest to a certain region or even to the host country of an institute, as long as they have a possible extension to global applicability.

## Annex 1: Goals of the UNU Strategic Plan 2011–2014

### 1.1. Twin Institutes

- Strengthen UNU's presence in developing and transitional countries and intensify research and teaching interaction with developed countries.
- Strengthen UNU's activities in developing countries through networking.

### 1.2. Postgraduate Programmes

- Improve teaching and capacity development and their relevance and recognition.

### 1.3. Focusing knowledge production, broadening knowledge accumulation, strengthening knowledge dissemination and sharing

- Develop more synergies in research within UNU and a higher impact of the research results. At the same time, be prepared to act as a knowledgeable think tank in some of the major areas of interest to the United Nations system.
- Strengthen knowledge dissemination and knowledge sharing.
- Emphasize user-focused, high-impact research and teaching: being leaders rather than followers.
- Strengthen the mutual inspiration of teaching, research and think-tank activities.

### 1.4. Systems approach

- Understand and master today's problems in peace, development and sustainability in an all-embracing and holistic manner.

### 1.5. Online learning/education

- Make available classroom teaching to people who do not have easy access.

### 2.1. UNU's connection and contributions to its key stakeholders

- Strengthen collaboration with other United Nations organizations, mechanisms, the private sector and civil society.

### 2.2. Roots in the host countries

- Strengthen the presence in and interaction with UNU host countries.

### 2.3. Networking with leading industries

- Forge collaborative relationships with leading industries.

### 2.4. Consolidation and branding

- Build and protect the UN University brand.

### 2.5. Internal and external communication

- Improve UNU's capacity to communicate.

### 2.6. Mobilization of additional resources

- Expand and diversify the University's financial base.

### 2.7. Connecting up with UNU Alumni

- Coordinate and maintain contact with UNU alumni as a resource for the future.

### 3.1. UNU postgraduate degrees

- Ensure that UNU postgraduate programmes are globally recognized.

### 3.2. Quality assurance and quality improvement framework

- Make UNU teaching and research trustworthy and highly regarded.

### 3.3. UNU human resources

- Provide stability and continuity for UNU's postgraduate programmes and research and for advising students.

### 3.4. Gender balance within UNU

- Give emphasis in recruitment and human resourced management policies to ensuring gender balance and equity within the UNU system.

### 3.5. Environmentally sustainable operations

- Develop and implement a university-wide environmental management plan.