REGIONAL CENTRE OF EXPERTISE
ON EDUCATION FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

ACKNOWLEDGED BY

UNITED NATIONS
UNIVERSITY

Session 1 and Session 2
Wednesday 5 November 2014, 9:00-9:45
Okayama, Japan
Minutes

Session 1: Opening

Kazuhiko Takemoto (Director of UNU-IAS) introduced the 9th RCE Global Conference by emphasizing the ten years of experience in the RCE community in ESD. The community stands tall today with 129 RCEs to face the challenges ahead.

Welcome remarks were made by the City of Okayama's Mayor Mr. Masao Omori, introducing some of the many local initiatives in 2014. Okayama was a model for Sustainable Development that can be used worldwide.

Mr. Soichiro Seki (Vice-Minister for Global Environmental Affairs, Ministry of the Environment Japan) congratulated the RCE network for all its hard work. The community was established in 2003. In 2005, only seven RCE's existed, including Okayama. Since then it has grown to a wide network of 129 RCEs globally. He emphasized what a great pleasure it was for the Japanese government to provide funding to UNU-IAS for these types of ventures. The RCE initiative was a pioneer in this respect.

Alexander Leicht (Chief, ESD Section, UNESCO) acknowledged the different core organizations within UNU and mentioned the importance of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) coming to an end. Japan was the country that most loyally had supported UNESCO and it was fitting to host this event in Okayama, a city that had a very rich Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) tradition. Next week, the final report on the UN decade will be published, which will give the ESD community two lessons: (1) the importance of local stakeholders and (2) the importance of political leadership at the different levels (local, national, and international). The report will show some successes and challenges during the decade to drive ESD forward. The new framework for ESD will include five priority areas, one of them being local communities and initiatives. ESD required strong partnerships and the RCE Community has shown how this can be done.

Hans Van Ginkel (Former Rector, UNU) explained the original idea behind the RCE network was a mobilization movement and it was a pleasure to see so many people involved. He thanked Okayama for being such a strong supporter of ESD.

Session 2: Introductory Session – Highlights of the RCE Community

Zinaida Faveeda introduced the session by mentioning the history of RCEs, with the establishment of the ESD Programme in 2003 at UNU-IAS and the RCE concept being born in 2004. The Annual Global Conference took place for the first time in 2006. In 2007, continental networks emerged and in 2008 thematic and strategic networks were developed. Today, there was a strong emphasis on

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capacity development and assessment of learning in the community. The RCE portal was the main communication tool with additional items such as the e-bulletin and other publications.

There was a desire for more promotional activities from the RCEs and an increased documentation of good practices and research. The RCE Award recognized the yearly achievements in the respective RCEs. There were several strategic actions (RCEs and the Global Learning Space, RCEs and Capacity Development, RCEs and Research & Development) and several thematic actions (Climate Change, Health, Higher Education, Traditional Knowledge, Biodiversity, Sustainable Consumption and Production Systems, and Youth). Several Declarations such as the Tongyeong Declaration and the Okayama Declaration had been published.

Achievements
Asia Pacific – This region was strategically very interesting. The RCEs already had a post-2015 strategic plan in place. The different activities launched were along certain priorities defined post-2015. RCE assessment had taken place in eight RCEs.
Africa – There was plenty of regional networking with several workshops and forums for policy practice dialogues. The community often came together for constructive dialogue. Much input came from Zimbabwe to have for example national education plans. Ten RCEs have implemented assessments based on material developed, namely Hybrid Evaluation.
Americas - There was a strong commitment made in Jalisco, Mexico, while looking into the Global Action Programme (GAP) and other policy processes. The Eco-journal was an example of a collaborative project. Other collaborations were being done in the area of traditional knowledge and disadvantaged youth.
Europe - This was the second largest group in terms of number of RCEs. There were meetings in different subsections and much use of new media. Nine RCES were involved in the Open Educational Project. Alternative curriculum education led by RCE Manchester had brought together three RCEs. RCE Vienna has led five projects. RCE Oldenburger Muensterland brought together three RCEs in a teacher education project.

Summary
There were multiple interpretations, roles and directions of the RCE network. The main one was that this was a community of diversity, a community with innovative governance and a community that aspired to learn and research. Across continents there was plenty of information exchange and collaborative projects. Assessment of RCE was under way. There was more emphasis on action and research of themes. Aggregation of the RCE Community knowledge

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was one of the major goals and the communication of this knowledge to sustain the Community and up-scale activities beyond 2014.

The main focus lied in monitoring and doing more peer-related work, enhance the self-assessment procedures and thus enable capacity building and more research activities. The development of thematic clusters was under way and one major objective was to identify successful models to bring the Community to the next level. How can we engage globally? Zinaida Faveeda referred to two documents (1) the Okayama Declaration and (2) the Guiding Principles for the RCE Community. Both of these documents would be discussed during the conference and were important to refine the Community's identity.