

In July 2019, Muneo Kaigo and Hidehiro Yamamoto from the Univ. of Tsukuba cluster lead participated in the UN HLPF 2019 held in New York where Tsukuba made a brief presentation of the current network of satellites (City U. Hong Kong, Univ of Maribor, Univ. of Carthage and Philippine Women's University) regarding SDG 10, reducing inequality. On October 2nd – 4th 2019, the 1st TSUKUBA CONFERENCE was held in Tsukuba city, Japan as a new forum to discuss the future of the world, under the theme how do science, technology and innovation contribute to Society 5.0 and the SDGs. The Tsukuba cluster lead arranged a concurrent session titled “International Collaboration and Co-creation for SDGs” where the guest speakers for this session were Dr. Pornchai Mongkhonvanit (President of Siam University), Dr. Hilligje van't Land (Secretary General of the International Association of Universities), and Mr. Nobuyuki Ota (CEO at Valeocon Management Consulting Asia Pacific). The main focus of the talks delivered in this session was on the role of higher education and how the social sciences and humanities can play an important role toward the achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Education and research—and their contributions to society—represent vital steps that can be taken by those involved in higher education. Education fosters the next generation, where it is essential for the creation of opportunities to continue learning, innovating and sharing knowledge. Research pertaining to local and global issues plays an important role in creating the necessary foresight in terms of new threats to humanity while also constructing opportunities through new partnerships and collaboration. Societal contributions through education range from cooperation among local communities and creating a knowledge-based economy to building strategic partnerships with local actors. Higher education has an enormous role to play in efforts toward achieving the SDGs; however, a redefinition of higher education necessary toward this end. In today's world, many tensions exist—specifically, those pertaining to global vs. local relations, tradition vs. modernity, spirituality vs. materialism, long-term vs. short-term, competition vs. equality, and national vs. transnational (among others). These tensions limit economic development and create problems for social equality, in turn adding stress to our global environment. Therefore, the role of Society 5.0 is important, as this may represent a solution for tackling the issues adding such tensions and stressors to our world. In approaching such solutions, the role of humanities and the social sciences, and higher education more generally, is vital. This concurrent session acknowledges that one university alone cannot combat all such challenges; therefore, the importance of the international research network and cooperation among universities (particularly those being created by IAU) cannot be underestimated along the path toward achieving the SDGs.

Finally, from February 2020, the Tsukuba team has initiated the SDG Inequality Seminar series where researchers from the Univ. of Tsukuba, University of Tokyo (Prof. Satoshi Miwa) and Okayama University (Prof. Ken Aoo) made presentations regarding inequality and how universities can participate in co-creation for the SDGs. The 1st report in Japanese was published in March, 2020.