

3rd Symposium on Sustainability Science: towards guidelines on research and education

Excellencies, madam ADG, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me first express my sincere appreciation for the preparation of this symposium by Ms. Schlegel, Ms. Al-Nasif, and all who have worked for it.

I also wish to welcome distinguished panelists, including dr. Takeuchi, vice-Rector of UN University, and all of you who have come to participate.

The Government of Japan supports the UNESCO-led “Sustainability Science” by its Funds-in-Trust project, and this symposium is a most important milestone in the project.

(2020 sustainable development goals and Sustainability Science)

As the third draft of “Guidelines on Sustainability Science in Research and Education” aptly mentions, Sustainability Science can work effectively at the background of the Sustainable Development Goals as set out in the UN Agenda 2030.

(global challenge Sustainability Science is to address is complex and multi-faceted)

But the challenges that Sustainability Science is to address are complex and multi-faceted. Take, for example, climate change issues. The sea level rise and the securing of fresh water are big challenges for island countries. Floods and droughts are severe problems for African countries.

(Sustainability Science requires transdisciplinary approach)

The 3rd draft aptly defines:

Multidisciplinary as multiple disciplines;

Interdisciplinary as cross fertilization, or mutually enriching cooperation, among multiple disciplines; and

Transdisciplinary as both interdisciplinary and based on the collaboration between scientists and non-academic stakeholders.

To put it simply, sustainable development is a goal, Sustainability Science is an important tool towards the goal, and for the tool to be effective, we would need Sustainability Science to be transdisciplinary, involving various stakeholders to play roles.

(framework conditions for Sustainability Science to be effective)

The draft guidelines provide 3 pillars by which Sustainability Science to be effective:

Mainstreaming Sustainability Science in research;

Mainstreaming Sustainability Science in higher education; and

Strategic funding for Sustainability Science in research and education.

For the mainstreaming of Sustainability Science in higher education,

The draft stipulates more specific guidelines for

1. Higher education institutions;
2. Individual researchers and teachers;
3. Governments; and
4. Society and community.

(concluding remarks)

It goes without saying that we need a science-based, and contextual approach. We need science for sustainability. At the same time, we should be able to foster an enabling environment where sustainability science can effectively contribute to the challenges of our time, in different contexts and circumstances.

I hope our collective efforts at this symposium will produce useful and helpful guidelines on Sustainability Science in research and education.

Let me conclude my remark by expressing special thanks to Ms Christine Abdalla Iskandar for her devoted preparation for this symposium.