

Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI)
From Rio to Paris: Higher Education for Climate Change Action
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Remarks by Jonas Haertle, Head, PRME Secretariat, UN Global Compact

Encouraging transformative management education and research for sustainable development

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Secretary-General Pierre Henri Guignard,
Mr. Svein Osttveit,
Partners and supporters of the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative,

2015 is the Time for Global Action

This year the world has an historic opportunity to adopt both a new sustainable development agenda and to reach a global agreement on climate change.

- The Global Goals for Sustainable Development were passed by the UN General Assembly just a few weeks ago.
- Climate action is essential for transformative sustainable development.
- People and organisations all over the world are demanding leadership and action in 2015 on sustainable development and climate change.
- It's time to redirect our technology, money and ingenuity to transform our economies, ensure equality and promote a sustainable future. This requires leadership, from government, business, civil society, and in particular academia.
- This is vital to building long-term resilience in our communities and to keep global temperature increase below 2°C compared to pre-industrial temperatures.

I am speaking today on behalf of the UN Global Compact, the UN's corporate sustainability initiative with over 8,000 companies, and in my role as Head of the Principles for Responsible Management Education. Let me reflect on both, respectively, the business and the management education sectors.

The role of business

It is clear that today's global challenges are too complex for any one sector to face alone. Businesses must be heard, leveraged and invited to co-create scalable climate change solutions to bring about meaningful and lasting change.

- Many businesses wield the same power as governments; they collaborate within complex global supply chains and have brands that citizens engage with on a daily basis.

- As business has gone global, companies realize that they cannot succeed in economies and markets that fail.
- As a result, companies have evolved from being resource takers to market builders, where companies have a stake in building healthy and clean societies.

Business and Climate

- While a host of related critical issues – in particular, water, food, energy and health and humanitarian concerns – are at stake, businesses are seeing climate change not as a stand-alone environmental issue, but rather as a global cross-cutting challenge to which they need to adapt in order to remain profitable.
- Engagement by the private sector that is collaborative, serious and solutions-oriented is vital to building long-term resilience in our communities and to reaching a global legal climate agreement by 2015.
- Caring for Climate is the UN Global Compact, UNEP and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)'s initiative aimed at advancing the role of business on climate change.
- It is the world's largest voluntary business and climate initiative with over 400 companies from 60 countries which have signed on to accelerate climate change progress in a collective, responsible manner.
- Caring for Climate signatories are committing to set greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets, work collaboratively with other companies and governments and publicly report on climate performance on an annual basis.
- This year in December here in Paris, alongside COP21, we will organize the **Caring for Climate Business Forum as the official interface with business of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21)**.

The role of education and research – Climate change action by higher education sector.

Let me now turn to the role of business and management education in support of climate change action.

- Over the past years we have seen a shift among business and management schools with regards to sustainability issues. The Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) plays a critical role in empowering and educating business leaders to understand the implications of climate change and the opportunities of a low-carbon, climate resilient economy.
- The PRME initiative is supported by more than 600 leading business schools from over 80 countries across the world, educating 2.5 million students. Through a set of six core principles these management institutions follow a framework for gradual, systemic change based on continual improvement, networked learning, and accountability to stakeholders.
- PRME is a founder and active supporter of the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI).
- Focusing on today's topic, I am encouraged to say that we are not starting from zero. Quite the contrary, in 2009 PRME convened the first meeting to galvanize support from management education on climate change action. As a result, the [Copenhagen Conference Declaration: A Call to Action for Management Education](#), called on business schools around the world to integrate climate-related topics into management education and research, and to lead by example
- Since then, business schools have actively incorporated climate change into their curriculum, research and campus greening activities.

- For example, PRME signatory:
 - [Sabanci University](#) in Turkey is the local partner of the Carbon Disclosure Project for Turkey. CDP-Turkey has been a transformational project for Turkey's corporate sector. As of 2014, 41 Turkish companies reported their emissions and climate change strategies with the help of Sabanci University.
 - The [American University in Cairo](#) became the first institution in the Middle East and North Africa to conduct a comprehensive study of its campus practices and its impact on climate change in 2012.
 - [Glasgow Caledonian University](#) in Scotland set up the Centre for Climate Justice, in partnership with the Mary Robinson Foundation for Climate Justice, and has taken a global lead in creating a repository for the collection of research data within the increasingly important field of climate justice.
 - And in terms of teaching, for example [Toulouse Business School](#) has a specialised Master's in Sustainable Development and Climate Change.

There are many more inspiring examples and I invite you to review our website for more.

In summary, we are witnessing a change in the management education sector. Climate change issues seem to become increasingly embedded in curricula, research and practices. This makes me hopeful that we are at a tipping point where this topic becomes mainstream. Thanks to all of you who have worked on these changes. Still, more has to be done so I encourage you to continue your good work and to help make the COP21 outcomes a reality.

Thank you.

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