

#### Higher Education Matters in a World of Transformation

*A brief introduction by Pam Fredman, IAU Former President (2016-2022), Former Rector Gothenburg University and Hilligje van't Land, IAU Secretary General*

The education sector, and in particular the higher education sector, have both the opportunity and the responsibility to shape the society of today for tomorrow. Society at large needs better equipped citizens to address the grand challenges of our time.

Environmental, ecological and health hazards, economic uncertainty, political instability, international insecurity, disruptive technologies, scarce resources, are just a few of the challenges we face. Academics are expected to be both experts and change agents to overcome those challenges. Fundamental changes in ethos, education, research practices and student expectations are calling for serious transformation of the higher education sector.

Higher education is a key stakeholder in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - Transforming our World. The very mission of universities is to help better understand the world we live in; education, research and community engagement should be geared towards generating a better future for all. There is a need for a global movement to **reinvigorate and redefine the public purpose of universities** as a common good.

At the same time, around the world, universities are facing increased pressure to justify their existence as the very idea of higher education is put in question.

In an ever-changing world, the values on which universities have thrived as institutions fostering independent critical thinking are increasingly compromised by market pressures and political interference. Fundamental values such as academic freedom and institutional autonomy, are being eroded. Yet the world needs universities that educate insightful and creative citizens equipped with strong analytical and critical thinking skills, combined with wisdom, character and responsible mind-sets.

The IAU promotes Higher Education as core driver of change: *“A university education is about freedom, respect and responsibility: freedom to explore and express ideas; respect for the views of others; responsibility to use knowledge for the wider benefit of society.”*

Together universities and other higher education institutions shape, transform and contribute to creating more democratic, just and sustainable societies. IAU will continue to advocate for these fundamental values and principles at international governmental organisations such as UN and UNESCO, but also through its work with different international, regional, national bodies to inform policy and influence change.

Through the broad stakeholder consultation conducted as part of the strategic planning exercise, Members reaffirmed a continuation of the four strategic priorities of the IAU, namely:

- Globally-engaged and Value-based Leadership;
- Internationalisation for Society and the Global Common Good;
- Higher education for Sustainable Development;
- Digital Transformation of Higher Education.

These four areas are the key priorities through which the Association will focus its efforts in the years to come.

Beyond the programme priorities, it remains a key priority for the Association to continue to expand as an inclusive membership organisation with a sound financial basis.

We look forward to collaborating with our Members, partners and key higher education stakeholders to continue to shaping the future of higher education for the common global good.

## The International Association of Universities

### - *The Global Voice of Higher Education*

**Founded in 1950**, under the auspices of UNESCO, the International Association of Universities (IAU) is a membership-based organisation which purpose is to advance higher education (HE) around the world. It comprises more than 600 institutional and organisational Members in some 130 countries.

**It is the leading global Association of higher education institutions and organisations** around the world. **IAU serves as a global forum for leaders in higher education** to reflect and rally around common priorities. It acts as the voice of higher education to UNESCO and other international organisations. It caters to its Members but extends its services also to organisations, institutions and authorities, as well as other stakeholders in the field of higher education.

IAU is an independent, non-governmental organisation and **official partner of UNESCO (Associate Status)**, has **consultative status** at the **UN Economic and Social Council** and **participatory status** with the **Council of Europe**. Its Secretariat is based at UNESCO headquarters in Paris.

### IAU Vision



To contribute to peace and human development by promoting and enhancing the power of higher education to transform lives, build capacity, connect diverse peoples, generate and disseminate new knowledge, create insights and find sustainable solutions to local and global challenges.



## IAU Mission

As the global voice of higher education, IAU will be the most influential and representative global association of diverse higher education institutions and their organisations, advocating and advancing a dynamic leadership role for higher education in society. Articulating the fundamental values and principles that underpin education and the pursuit, dissemination and application of knowledge, the Association will lead and advocate the development of higher education policies and practices that respect diverse perspectives, promote social responsibility, and contribute to the development of a sustainable future.

IAU will be a think tank and forum for the development of new approaches, the sharing of best practice and the undertaking of joint action, encouraging and facilitating innovation, mutual learning, and cooperation among higher education institutions around the world.

### IAU carries out its mandate through five main actions:

- *Advocacy*: the mission, vision and values of the association informs our work in this area and IAU will continue to advocate for the transformative power of higher education as part of a global conversation with stakeholders and policymakers;
- *Standard setter*: the IAU will use its unique global platform to convene and influence stakeholders and experts to set standards and inform its policy outputs and declarations and serve as a place of trust for discussion and negotiating international standards;
- *Knowledge hub*: the IAU will scan the global higher education landscape and utilise its unique global network and mapping tools to detect, monitor, and inform on global and local trends and developments within the higher education sector;
- *Capacity builder*: the IAU convenes and facilitates peer-to-peer learning among Members to enhance their individual and institutional capabilities and capacities across all its priorities and work;
- *International collaboration*: the IAU's core purpose is to facilitate international collaboration among universities and other HEIs and to serve as a catalyst for international collaboration by expanding and curating an international and inclusive network of peers. All our activities are international and collaborative in scope; this is a transversal element that cuts across all elements of our strategy and activities' programme.



## Values

- **Academic freedom, Institutional autonomy and social responsibility and scientific integrity and ethical behaviour**: prerequisites for any form of academic enterprise and the bedrock of progress
- **Cooperation and solidarity** based on mutuality of interests and shared benefits

- **Social responsibility** of higher education to use knowledge for the wider benefit of society.
- **Tolerance** of divergent opinion, free from political interference
- **Ethics and Equity** in access and success in higher education and open knowledge
- Higher education and research in the **public interest**
- **Quality** in learning, research and community engagement.

The IAU continues to expand an international network of peers while taking into account the global perspective and balanced regional participation in all its events and actions.

These transversal values are underpinning the work in all areas of activities of the Association in the pursuit of the vision and mission and through the different core functions through which it is implementing its mandate.

### IAU Strategy 2030 - Our Work in Context

Universities are traditional and modern, conservative and progressive, inclusive and exclusive. Universities have no boundaries, they are institutions of tremendous influence that transcend geographical, social, and cultural limits. Over centuries of existence, they have adapted to externally imposed regulations, norms and pressures and have been responsive to societal expectations and changes in their environment. Their conceptual space is the global landscape of knowledge and ideas. Even when faced with limited financial resources, universities operate from a position of intellectual abundance, proposing solutions and developing opportunities.

This is more important than ever as the world is faced with multitude of challenges. Unsustainable modes of living and overexploitation of natural resources in today's society is jeopardizing our future. The UN 2030 Agenda under the slogan *Transforming our world* and the associated 17 sustainable development goals (SDG) provide a frame where higher education institutions can work together towards a sustainable future, through the development of new ideas and knowledge and by empowering citizens to address the grand challenges of our world.

Digital transformation and rapid technological advances are having an immense impact on research, teaching and collaboration, creating new opportunities, yet also new challenges. It also means that the spectrum of education providers - public and private - is becoming more diverse. As well, new questions around boundaries and governance are being raised when some operations can be shifted to a virtual space with global access. As a consequence, it is being asked whether the university is still the most suitable institution to provide the skills and competences the labour market requires. Yet, what about the needs of society? These needs are also to drive any debate on the transformation of education systems around the world. Indeed, if in epistemic terms, universities are confronted with expanding scepticism, which, in conjunction with increasingly populist and nationalist policies, tries to cast doubt on the

validity and relevance of academic values and higher education as trusted places of knowledge and research, in social and moral terms, the university is being challenged to be more responsive to questions of equity, equality and access and urged to more clearly engage in shaping just and sustainable societies. A complex balancing act.

These are examples of the complex context in which higher education institutions are operating and that will impact transformations of the higher education sector.

Against this backdrop, the IAU will continue to structure its action around four strategic priorities, that mutually reinforce each other and contribute to the overall vision and mission of the Association, namely:

- Globally-engaged and Value-based Leadership;
- Internationalisation for Society and the Global Common Good;
- Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Development;
- Digital Transformation of Higher Education.

## Thematic Priorities and Enabling Strategies

This eight-year strategic plan lays the foundations for the successful implementation of our strategic priorities. Identified by the Members and with partners of the IAU, these priorities are key to shaping the future of the higher education sector.

The activities across these priorities will be implemented with the transversal objective to instil a culture of cooperation and mutual learning, and foster a sense of community around these priorities at the global level.

Together IAU Members can make a distinctive contribution to the advancement of higher education by connecting universities in a meaningful, fair, and equitable way all around the world.

## Globally-engaged and Value-based Leadership

*Leadership is a core aspect of quality higher education. It enables institutions to respond to complex institutional challenges and drive social transformation. Higher education leadership must be underpinned by values and a sense of responsibility to both their institution and society at large; leadership must constantly evolve in order to anticipate emerging challenges and grasp opportunities to bring about positive change.*

*It is essential that higher education institutions fully contribute to the development of sustainable and democratic societies by ensuring fair, equitable, and inclusive access to education. Leadership must strive for quality across all parts of the universities' mission and ensure greater institutional responsiveness. A key objective of the IAU is the formation of global citizenship by inculcating a more meaningful sense of collective and individual agency and a wider scope of teaching with deeper social, ethical and conceptual questions that go beyond the immediate purview of the subject matter.*

*IAU endeavours to strengthen capacities of university leaders for better governance and enhance cooperation among Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the world, whilst also invigorating university leadership to maximise their impact on communities locally and globally.*

*All discussions and activities across the IAU priorities are directed at leadership which is thus a transversal characteristic of the work of the IAU. Leadership thus reaches beyond aspects of university management to a wider concept of thought-leadership.*

## **Strategic Objectives**

- **Advocacy:** promotion of value-based leadership in HEI to maximise the impact of HE and safeguard the integrity of research, teaching and service
- **Think tank and global hub:** provision of a forum in which ideas are discussed, defined and tested for purpose; communicated to influence and persuade, disseminated among peers and society at large to influence good leadership and address current local and global challenges
- **Monitoring** and dissemination of information, reflections and insights on good leadership and best practices
- **Capacity-building:** facilitating professional development through peer-to-peer training to support those entrusted with the implementation of ideas and organizational change. This refers to an exchange of best practices and experiences for professional development, better governance and management

## **Lines of action**

- **Representation and Intervention:** IAU will continue to amplify the global voice of higher education and represent the voice of higher education at relevant governmental high-level meetings and conferences advocating for the importance of universities in building democratic and sustainable societies.
- **Webinar Series:** building on the webinars already carried out as part of the *IAU Series on The Future of Higher Education*, IAU will continue to welcome university leaders from around the globe to explore what makes for a good university – across all its aspects – organizational, epistemologically, social - and share their insights and experiences across HE cultures and systems to inspire new thinking and action within higher education and in the world. The objective is to identify and debate current and emerging trends and challenges in higher education and society, analyse how they bear on each other, and connect university leaders by fostering encounters for debate and partnerships for creative, just and sustainable change.
- **Podcast Series: “Global Leadership Voices”:** this podcast series will focus on personalities and themes in higher education in short podcasts. This format allows to go deeper and connect a leadership theme with the individual to give the listener a better understanding of the interviewee’s motivation, the challenges, the analytical



frame, and background. Outcome: a mosaic of leadership interviews which capture the global spirit of IAU, its diversity across the higher education landscape, and yet the interconnectedness and recognition of HE as a common denominator.

- **IAU Leadership Lab:** to create a forum for constructive goal-oriented dialogue. The objective is to create an informal space that brings together university leaders to share their ideals, organisational strategies, and experiences for better governance and capacity-building among peers. Convinced that quality higher education is central to improving the greater good, this forum will challenge university leaders transcend academic cultures and systems and inspire new thinking and action within higher education generally, and higher education management more particularly. The Leadership Lab will identify and debate current and emerging trends and challenges in university governance and management and connect university leaders by fostering networks and partnerships for their personal development and creative, just and sustainable institutional change.

## Internationalisation for Society and the Global Common Good

*"[Internationalization of Higher Education is] the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society." (De Wit, H., Hunter F., Howard L., Egron-Polak E. (Eds.) (2015) "Internationalization of Higher Education", European Parliament, Brussels: EU).*

*The IAU's working definition of internationalization emphasizes the fact that internationalization is an intentional process, not a passive experience. It underscores that internationalization is not a goal in itself, but a means of enhancing quality and excellence of higher education and research. In addition, it declares that internationalization needs to serve societal needs, rather than focusing solely on economic rationales and returns.*

*It must be acknowledged however that this vision of internationalization is too often more aspirational than real and that in reality internationalization as implemented around the world is often quite different.*

*Internationalization and global cooperation remain fundamental in today's world. The major challenges to today's world, also documented in the 2030 Agenda and the sustainable development goals (SDGs), are global in nature. Therefore, solutions can and must be found at the global and local level.*

### Vision

IAU's vision is to be the facilitator and promoter of an internationalization for all, in which all the different voices of nations, people and cultures of the world are represented and heard equally; an internationalization which allows students to grow as global responsible citizens, which promotes collaboration in research to find answers to most pressing challenges at global level; an internationalization which allows the sharing of experiences

to find solutions to local and global problems and benefits local communities; an internationalization for society and the global common good, an internationalization that incorporates a global outlook in HEIs.

Such an internationalization is a fundamental tool to build a global community of higher education and research which contributes to openness, collaboration, social justice and equity, mitigate global asymmetries through education, research and community/societal engagement. As the global association of universities, IAU endorses and fosters a vision of openness, collaboration, social justice and equity. To achieve such a vision of the world, the contribution of the higher education sector as provider of education, research and community/societal engagement cannot be underestimated and to build a global community of higher education and research, internationalization is a fundamental tool.

## Strategic objectives

To achieve this goal IAU has established three strategic objectives directed at different stakeholders:

- a. Higher education institutions around the world have a clear understanding of internationalization and are aware of the latest trends and developments;
- b. Higher education institutions around the world have the capacity to develop and implement a comprehensive internationalization strategy;
- c. Governments, international governmental and nongovernmental organizations share a vision of internationalization for society and the global common good and support it.

## Lines of action

In order to achieve these strategic objectives IAU will perform four main types of actions:

- **Think tank and Global hub:** to provide fora in which the concept of an internationalization for all can be developed and to act as a focal point at the global level for knowledge sharing and mutual learning in internationalization.
- **Research:** to provide a critical analysis of the current trends in internationalization.
- **Advisory services:** to provide support to HEIs in the implementation of an internationalization plan and action plan.
- **Advocacy:** to engage governments and international governmental and nongovernmental organizations, university leadership and university associations in the promotion and implementation of internationalization for society and the global common good.

## Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Development

*Higher education is a key driver of sustainable development and plays a vital role in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Transforming our World. The IAU facilitates meaningful and critical engagement by monitoring and disseminating*



*academic strategic approaches and outputs in pursuit of the 2030 Agenda and beyond and by highlighting HEIs' social responsibility for sustainable development.*

*Future well-being of humanity and the planet depends on successful resolution of the interconnected challenges of economic, social, cultural, and environmental sustainability. IAU's actions closely align with and support the 2030 Agenda and related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Furthermore, IAU HESD initiatives make use of this interdisciplinary and versatile framework for university collaboration, in research, teaching and learning, campus life and community engagement. For over three decades, the Association takes part in international and regional initiatives and holds events to promote the integration of sustainable development (SD) into higher education policies, strategies and work.*

## IAU HESD

Through the strategic thematic priority Higher Education for Sustainable Development (HESD), IAU promotes a whole institution approach to sustainable Development (WIA), which fosters the incorporation of sustainable development concepts and principles in all dimensions of universities – teaching & learning, research, community engagement and campus operations.

## Vision

IAU's vision is to be the facilitator and promoter of HESD for all, in which the different voices of nations, people and cultures of the world are represented and heard equally. HESD is practiced through a whole institution approach, involving all stakeholders at the institution, promoting collaboration between HEIs and community partners at a local level, and to jointly find innovative pathways towards a more sustainable future, and advocate at a global level. Higher Education's engagement with SD is fundamental for a transformative process for society, within the framework of the UN 2030 Agenda and the targets set for each of the SDGs.

## Strategic Objectives

To achieve this vision, the IAU will continue to guide and lead the global higher education community, including all stakeholders, towards a common understanding of sustainability and the different dimensions (environmental, social, economic), with a strong emphasis on partnerships for the SDGs, and will proactively engage its members in this endeavour.

- **Think tank and global hub:** through the development of strategic alliances, in particular through the IAU HESD Global Cluster Network, IAU strengthens its work in support of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs. Through an enhanced involvement of IAU Members in HESD, IAU works towards increasing implementation of the 2030 Agenda in higher education and society globally.
- **Research:** IAU monitors trends and issues related to HESD; issues reports; evaluates assessment tools related to HESD; creates regional and international research and

teaching and learning initiatives among universities committed to SD. These achievements are shared with others wishing to engage in social, environmental and ethical responsibility. IAU encourages peer-to-peer learning using the IAU global network of HE leaders.

- **Advisory service:** IAU provides leadership training, capacity building and networking services.
- **Advocacy:** IAU fosters 'Whole Institutional Approaches' at the Leadership level to mainstream SD in all areas (management, administration, teaching and research, campus operations) and involves all stakeholders (student, technical and administrative staff, teachers, researchers, managers) in environmental, ethical, social and economic responsibility.

## Lines of actions

To achieve these strategic objectives IAU will perform three main types of actions under the umbrella of an “ABC Strategy”:

- **Advice & Advocate:** through research and information sharing at events; through the regular monitoring of development through IAU HESD Global Surveys; through providing advice to universities wishing to engage with the SDGs or wishing to build joint research and education projects.
- **Build synergies & network:** through the IAU Global Cluster leads and satellite institutions; by building **partnerships for the goals** with HEIs, associations, UN organisations, and societal actors.
- **Communicate & Convene:** through the improvement of the IAU HESD Portal; the further development of the IAU SDG Publications; the organisation of seminars, workshops and IAU and joint conferences with partners around the world.

## Digital Transformation of Higher Education

*The digital transformation of society is inevitably reshaping the higher education sector and it impacts the way HEIs operate at all levels, from governance to teaching and learning, from the content of curricula to knowledge production and research activities. This constitutes an important transformation of higher education that comes both with new opportunities as well as challenges. It is an ongoing process that higher education institutions are reacting to, interacting with, shaping to remain relevant and to adapt to increasingly digitalised societies.*

### Vision

The vision and mission for this priority is guided by the **2022 Policy Statement: “Transforming Higher Education in a Digital World for the Common Global Good”**. It outlines essential values, principles and bold ambitions that will find common breeding ground across countries and different contexts and will underpin the digital transformation of higher education. The policy statement therefor constitutes the guiding

frame for the operations of the Association in this area of work for the period of this strategic plan.

The digital transformation is spanning between new opportunities for learning, creating connections, collaborating across border both for teaching and learning and for research. At the other side of the spectrum, it is exacerbating inequalities and gaps between those who can make use of the benefits and those who cannot.

Striking the balance between exploring the potential of digital technologies to improve higher education while ensuring that no one is left behind or excluded in this process, constitute one of the most important global challenges before us.

As part of the Policy Statement, IAU recognizes that digital technologies are a tool – a means to an end and that it is a human responsibility to shape and decide how to make use of these to contribute to improving human condition and building sustainable societies.

It is therefore essential part of the work of IAU to nurture a shared commitment to build a humanistic, ethical, inclusive and purpose-based digital transformation of higher education for the global common good.

Through its Members, the IAU will pursue a range of initiatives and activities in its quest to further the implementation and pursuit of the principles laid out in the policy statement, whether it concerns the transformation of teaching and learning, the Open Science movement or the governance of higher education institutions. These activities are structured around the key functions of the Association with international collaboration as the transversal backbone for all actions.

## Strategic objectives and lines of action

The Association fulfils the following three functions as it carries out its work on digital transformation:

- **Normative standard-setting and advocacy:** IAU will advocate for the principles and values laid out in the policy statement adopted in 2022 and stands as the voice of higher education in events and drafting processes for policies relating to digital transformation;
- **Monitoring digital transformation trends:** IAU conducts research to monitor the development of digital transformation in higher education around the world and publishes reports and articles on current trends, challenges and opportunities;
- **Capacity-building and peer-to-peer learning:** IAU fosters institutional peer-to-peer learning opportunities on innovative digital transformation in higher education through diverse capacity building activities including institutional site visits and thematic expert groups.

## Strategic Development of the IAU as an Organisation

The IAU will work on the strategic development of the Association and thus amplify the global voice of higher education to advocate for the sector and for its role and responsibility to society and the world.

### IAU aims to:

- Expand its membership base and develop a customer relation management (CRM) system to improve Membership relationships and retention;
- Continue fostering a sense of community among its Members;
- Develop partnerships under all strategic priorities and new projects and initiatives of relevance to the Members and the global higher education community;
- Keep abreast with technological development in order to exploit the potential of its databases and management and communication tools to the full;
- Diversify income through sponsorship, partnerships, grants to support its activities and Mission while developing income-generating activities;
- Review its organisational and knowledge management systems in order to be as efficient, impactful and competitive as possible.

### IAU will do this by

- conducting membership surveys and membership engagement activities to assess needs and expectations of Members and monitor how they contribute to the IAU vision and mission.
- regularly evaluating and improving its communications' tools and mechanisms to better reach out to current and new Members;

- redeveloping its services and resources such as the WHED, ISAS, Masterclasses, Site visits, and Leadership Programmes;
- updating its practices, strategies and acquiring new technologies to manage and analyse its Member-interactions and data;
- continuing to show strategic international visibility at events around the world;
- maintaining and fostering the unique global and inclusive nature of the Association;
- devising and executing an institutional fundraising strategy;
- continuously developing its management and organisational skills whilst ensuring that the Secretariat continues to attract highly qualified and motivated staff;
- introducing an evaluation component in all activities and provide ongoing assessments of programs and impact;
- continued commitment to appropriate oversight, governance and reporting.

***Together we continue to build the Global Voice of Higher Education***

IAU Strategy 2030