



United Nations University (UNU)

Generating knowledge to address climate change

United Nations University operates as a decentralized “network of networks” with a truly interdisciplinary and global perspective. Academic activities are carried out by UNU Centre in Tokyo and a worldwide network of 13 Research and Training Centres and Programmes. The work of these core units is assisted by a network of 14 UNU Associated Institutions and hundreds of other cooperating institutions.

As an autonomous academic institution within the United Nations system, UNU seeks to contribute to efforts to resolve the pressing global problems of human security, peace and development that are the concern of the United Nations, its Peoples and Members States. UNU functions as an international community of scholars; a think tank for the United Nations system; a bridge between the UN and the international academic community; a builder of capacity, particularly in developing countries; and a platform for dialogue and creative, new ideas.

UNU work in the area of climate change

UNU undertakes four types of knowledge-generation, -transfer and -application activities: basic and applied research; targeted foresight and policy studies; capacity development; and communications, dissemination and outreach measures. Within the broad theme of “Environment and Development” — which, along with “Peace and Governance”, is a pillar of UNU’s programmatic work — the issue of climate change is addressed, to varying degrees, through substantive projects related to such topics as desertification, fragile ecosystems, water management, biodiversity, agrodiversity, zero emissions, the development and sustainable use of new and renewable energies, disaster prevention and mitigation, and human health.

Current or planned UNU projects with climate change as a key component include:

- ☛ research on climate change adaptation strategies,
- ☛ research on climate change impacts on water resources,
- ☛ assessment of the impact of climate change on food production,
- ☛ assessment of the role of agrodiversity in adapting to changes in environment,
- ☛ assessment of climate change-induced flood impacts,
- ☛ a review of adaptation to global environmental changes in cold deserts, and
- ☛ an exploration of the links between traditional knowledge and climate change.

Among UNU capacity-building initiatives with a specific focus on climate change are:

- ☛ capacity development for downscaling climate change predictions and impact assessment,
- ☛ capacity development on inter-linkages between climate change and other multilateral environmental agreements at the community level,
- ☛ capacity building for the development and sustainable use of geothermal resources in developing countries, and
- ☛ postgraduate research on climate change in the water sector.

Side events at the 13th United Nations Climate Change Conference

“Climate Risk Insurance” — Monday, 10 December, 6:00–7:30 PM

The Munich Climate Insurance Initiative is directed by the UNU Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS, Bonn) in coordination with Munich Re Corporation and other research consortium members. The aim is to develop information about climate-related financial coping mechanisms — specifically, what insurance-related mechanisms can be an effective part of adaptation strategies, and how they can dampen the negative effects of global warming and reduce natural catastrophe-related financial risks. This side event will explore ways in which insurance-related mechanisms for climate adaptation can be implemented. It also will examine multi-year, index-based weather coverage in Africa and Asia, and the roles of different actors in implementing the coping schemes.

“Sustainable Forest Management to Reduce Deforestation and Forest Degradation in the Tropics” — Monday, 10 December, 8:00–9:30 PM

Sustainable forest management in the tropics will play an important role in climate change mitigation and adaptation. The UNU Institute of Advanced Studies (UNU-IAS, Yokohama) and International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), along with a number of experts and project participants, will share their experiences in enhancing sustainable forest management, with a focus on avoiding deforestation and conserving biodiversity. A tropical perspective of combating deforestation in the context of the UNFCCC also will be presented.

Relevant UNU publications

A 37-page booklet on Biodiversity and Climate Change, published in May by UNU-IAS, is available online as a PDF file at <http://www.ias.unu.edu/>.

A book on Climate Change in Asia: Perspectives on the Future Climate Regime (ISBN 978-92-808-1152-0) is scheduled for publication by UNU Press in June 2008. This book is the result of a two-year study of domestic institutional processes in Asia to address climate change issues, national circumstances that impede full participation in the international debate, and elements of a plausible climate regime from an Asian perspective (including the linkages between climate change and sustainable development).

For more information about UNU, please see our website <http://www.unu.edu/>

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