

## Report HLPF 2019



The [United Nations High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development \(HLPF\)](#) 2019 took place from 9 to 18 July. During the eight-day meeting, representatives from governments, civil society and academia discussed the progress made towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This year's Theme was "Empowering People and ensuring inclusiveness and equality". Quality Education (SDG 4), Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8), Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10), Climate Action (SDG 13), Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16) and Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17) were reviewed. 47 countries presented their Voluntary National Reviews (VNR), increasing the total number of countries reviewed at least once to 142.

The International Association of Universities (IAU) participated for the very first time in one of the HLPF's, this year. The IAU delegation included eight Member Universities: the University of Bergen, the University of the West Indies, the Open University of Catalonia, Tsukuba University, Siam University, the University of Costa Rica, Bologna University, and the University of Gothenburg. All are part of the IAU Flagship project, the [IAU Global Cluster on HESD](#).

Interest in the HLPF among higher education is growing and so is the recognition about the importance of universities among the stakeholders at the HLPF. More than 34 universities actively participated in official events (official meetings, workshops, side events, special events, Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) labs) in the United Nations and at least another 15 attended the HLPF. In addition, multiple countries, among others from Belize, Sweden, and Korea, highlighted the important role higher education plays for the SDGs.

IAU's strong presence with large delegation was well received. Together with The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) and the Agence universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF) IAU organized one of the official workshops, spoke during the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI) special event and co-hosted the [International Green Gown Awards](#). In addition, IAU was invited to moderate the side event on *Education for Democracy – a cornerstone for sustainable*

societies. What did we learn from the Global Education Meeting 2018?, hosted by the Mission of Belgium to the UN and co-organised by the Kingdom of Belgium and the Council of Europe. Other IAU Members organized side events and some were invited to speak during official meetings. For example the University of Bergen co-hosted the side event *Partnerships for [Climate Action: The Science-Policy Nexus](#)* and the University Action of the West Indies organized: [Research and Innovation 4 Climate](#).



increased decline in academic freedom.

[Inspire.Change.Together](#) was the title of the workshop co-organised by IAU. The room only allowed for 114 people to attend; the room was full. There was a keen interest in the topic, which was apparent during the Q&A session at the end. A number of participants expressed concern about the lack of inclusion of higher education as a sector in UN processes. Others were worried about access to knowledge and an

[The HESI special event](#) was organized by UN Environment, with a main focus on green jobs. During the session, together with ACU Secretary General Dr. Joanna Newman and Georges Malamoud from AUF, IAU Secretary General Dr. Hilligje van't Land presented a newly developed statement about the



importance of higher education for Agenda 2030. Following an intervention by Times Higher Education and the newly Impact Rankings, van't Land questioned the methods of the THE SDG rankings and initiated a much welcomed open discussion. Prof. Dr. Henning Jensen, Rector of the University of Costa Rica, President of UDUAL and CONARE made the case for the transformational power of universities for local communities.

Overall, it was a very successful participation for IAU and contacts have already been established to organize more events during next year's HLPF. Universities have an important role to play for achieving the Global Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, and they are ready to contribute. More broadly speaking, higher education has a key role to play in society at large.