3RD EDITION

UNITAR INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE

Concept Note

Building on the momentum of the 2nd UNITAR International Research Conference (2UIRC), the **3rd UNITAR International Research Conference (3UIRC)** invites global scholars, practitioners, policymakers, students, and community leaders to engage in critical dialogue and collaborative action on **3 to 4 December 2025** at the UN House, Brussels.

Together, we aim to address the complex challenges of our time by advancing transformative, interdisciplinary approaches to achieving:

- **SDG 4** – Quality Education
- **SDG 13** – Climate Action
- **SDG 16** – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions
- **SDG 17** – Partnerships for the Goals

The 3UIRC will serve as a platform for fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, amplifying diverse voices, and bridging the gap between knowledge production and real-world action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals. We welcome contributions in the form of:

- Academic / Practitioner / Applied Research Paper
- Poster Presentation
- Research Presentation
- Panel Discussion / Roundtable

About the UNITAR International Research Conference

The UNITAR International Research Conference (UIRC) series is an annual flagship initiative of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) Division for Peace, led by its Online Learning and Education Unit in collaboration with international partner institutions. Launched in 2023 with its inaugural edition on Climate Security at the UN Bonn Campus, UIRC was established to convene policymakers, academics, practitioners, students, community leaders, and local communities around the critical intersections of education, peace, security, and sustainable development.

The series explores how higher education can act as a catalyst for addressing global challenges, ranging from conflict prevention and climate resilience to digital innovation, inclusive governance, and human security. Central to UIRC's ethos is the promotion of cross-disciplinary research, plurilingualism, and inclusive educational models aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the UN 2.0 vision. The second edition, held in Brussels in 2024, expanded these conversations by examining the evolving role of higher education in conflict resolution, community-based peacebuilding, and sustainability.

Looking ahead to the third edition in December 2025, the UIRC series will continue to build on its growing legacy, placing higher education, applied research, and community-driven peacebuilding frameworks at the forefront of global efforts to address pressing challenges such as economic justice, ecological security, and governance innovation. By integrating community leaders and local populations into its peacebuilding frameworks, the conference will emphasise the importance of grassroots perspectives, inclusive dialogue, and co-created solutions that foster long-term resilience and social cohesion. With a continued focus on bridging academic inquiry and real-

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world impact, the conference will deepen its commitment to fostering collaborative knowledge production and evidence-based solutions that shape policy and practice at every level.

The First Edition, 2023

The inaugural UNITAR International Research Conference on Climate Security was held on 23–24 November 2023 at the UN Bonn Campus. The conference brought together policymakers, experts, practitioners, and representatives from governments, international organisations, civil society, and academia to explore the complex relationship between climate change and security.

Key discussions centred on several crucial areas: Firstly, the conference emphasised conflict prevention and climate resilience as essential components of climate security. Participants explored the need to address root causes of climate-exacerbated conflicts and build social cohesion in vulnerable communities.

The conference highlighted the vital role of higher education institutions in integrating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through cross-pedagogical and multidisciplinary approaches. A new educational model incorporating cutting-edge research was identified as critical for Higher Education Institutions to support Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

The importance of plurilingualism in education was emphasised as a catalyst for effective interdisciplinary collaboration. The conference also considered the significance of SDG 16 and its relationship to progressing the UN 2030 Agenda through SDG 4.

Discussions also focused on climate change adaptation and mitigation, highlighting the urgent need for investment in climate-resilient infrastructure, sustainable land management, and disaster risk reduction. The role of renewable energy and low-carbon technologies in mitigating climate change and reducing security risks was emphasised.

First UNITAR International Research Conference. *Climate Security: Peace and Security Consequences of Climate Change.* UN Campus Bonn, 23–24 November 2023.

The conference recognised the importance of student voices in academic discourse, emphasising the need for better communication channels between academics, researchers and students. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) was highlighted as crucial for higher education institutions to actively engage with their learners and create an environment where students feel welcomed and comfortable expressing their needs and ideas.

The conference concluded with recommendations for strengthening climate-security linkages, mainstreaming climate security, building climate resilience, enhancing international cooperation, and promoting sustainable development. These outcomes will inform the second edition of the conference in 2024, focusing on addressing the nexus of climate security challenges, economic and business growth, and human security and development.

The Second Edition, 2024 (2UIRC)

The 2nd UNITAR International Research Conference (2UIRC) took place on 3-4 December 2024 at the United Nations Offices in Brussels, Belgium, marking a significant milestone in the exploration of higher education's role in global peace and sustainable development.

This event brought together academics, researchers, policymakers, and international organisations to explore the evolving role of higher education in conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and sustainable governance. It served as a platform for knowledge exchange, fostering research-based approaches that align with the UN 2.0 vision and the Global Pact for the Future.

Second UNITAR International Research Conference. *Our Common Agenda and the Role of Higher Education in Conflict, Peace, and Development: UN 2.0*. United Nations Offices, Brussels. 3–4 December 2024.

The 2UIRC was organised by UNITAR's Division for Peace in close collaboration with the Open University of Catalunya (UOC) and Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin), who served as core members of the organising committee. The conference was further supported by a network of international academic partners, including INA, I.P. (National Institute of Administration of Portugal), ÇAĞ University, the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, the Technical University of Sofia, and the University of Derby, who contributed through pre-conference workshops and thematic expertise. Together, these institutions brought a shared commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration and pedagogical innovation in support of education for sustainable development.

There was a strong call for higher education to engage more directly with society, through public scholarship, community-based research, and more transparent forms of knowledge-sharing. As one participant observed during a closing panel, "We can't lecture those people. They have as much experience as we do. The only thing we can do is to be a catalyst, to be a facilitator." That sense of humility and co-creation echoed across many of the sessions.

The close of the Second UNITAR International Research Conference (2UIRC) marked not just the end of an event, but the beginning of renewed conversations, commitments, and shared purpose. Over two days, our exchanges made it clear: higher education must move beyond its traditional boundaries and take an active role in shaping inclusive, applied, and globally responsive solutions. One of the strongest threads running through the conference was the call to bridge knowledge and action, shifting from sustainable development goals to sustainable development practices rooted in lived experience, social responsibility, and real-world impact.

Another key takeaway was the importance of reimagining collaboration. Lasting change, many argued, cannot be achieved in silos. As it emerged in one of the discussions, "We need to get out of our little bubbles. We need to get out of our little comfort zones of our networks." This spirit of openness underscored broader reflections on equity and inclusion—particularly the need to centre leadership and knowledge from the Global South. Proposals such as fee waivers, inclusive application processes, and co-funded institutional partnerships were brought forward as ways to expand access and participation. These conversations reflect the essence of SDG 17, reminding us that building just and effective partnerships is essential to achieving all other goals.

Conference Themes for the 3UIRC, 2025

1. Delivering SDG 4: Transforming Education for Resilience and Equity
- Exploring innovative models of education that prioritise resilience, adaptability, and equity in the face of global crises.
- Addressing barriers to quality education, particularly in marginalised communities, through global partnerships and inclusive policies.
- Investigating the role of digital and artificial intelligence technologies in making education more accessible, inclusive, and impactful.

2. Rethinking Security and Governance:
A Human-Centric and Natural Resource Perspective (SDG 16)
- Reimagining security and governance frameworks to prioritise human security, ecological well-being, and social justice.
- Showcasing collaborative approaches to peacebuilding that emphasise inclusion, dialogue, and locally led solutions.
- Exploring the relationship between education, justice, and strong institutions in fostering long-term peace and resilience.

3. Humanitarian Action and Climate Resilience:
Partnerships for a Sustainable Future (SDGs 13, 16 & 17)
- Examining the intersection of humanitarian efforts and climate adaptation, including community-driven resilience strategies and resource-sharing mechanisms.
- Highlighting collaborations between governments, civil society, and the private sector to address climate-related challenges equitably.

4. Advancing SDG 17: Building Effective and Inclusive Partnerships
- Developing innovative partnership models that promote equity, inclusivity, and co-creation, particularly with leadership from the Global South.
- Exploring mechanisms such as fee waivers, co-funded institutional partnerships, and participatory decision-making to expand access and engagement.
- Strengthening cross-sector collaborations to leverage diverse expertise and resources for achieving the SDGs.

5. Students as Catalysts of Change:
The Future of Leadership in Education and Beyond
- Amplifying student voices and perspectives to drive innovation, urgency, and relevance in addressing global challenges.
- Examining new ways to integrate student leadership into global partnerships and institutional reforms.

Why Contribute?

The 3UIRC provides a unique opportunity to build a network with fellow practitioners, academics, alumni, and experts to:

- Share innovative research and practices with a global, interdisciplinary audience.
- Influence the implementation of SDGs 4, 16, and 17 through actionable insights and collaborative strategies.
- Build resilient partnerships across sectors, geographies, and disciplines.
- Engage with diverse perspectives, including the lived experiences of communities and students.
- Shape the future of higher education and global development by bridging knowledge and practice.

Special Opportunities

- Dedicated sessions amplifying student voices and youth-led initiatives.
- Opportunities for accepted contributions to be featured in the UNITAR International Research Conference Special Edition.
- Networking opportunities to facilitate partnerships and collaborations for actionable progress on SDGs 4, 13, 16, and 17.

Call for Contributions

1. Abstracts

- **Abstract Submission Deadline: 17 October 2025.**
  Submit your Abstract here: https://event.unitar.org/form/3uirc-abstracts-submission

We invite submissions that contribute to advancing the SDGs through research, innovation, and interdisciplinary exchange. Submissions are welcome from academics, practitioners, and students in the following formats:

- Academic / Practitioner / Applied Research Papers
- Poster Presentations
- Workshops or Interactive Sessions
- Panel Discussions / Roundtables

All submissions should demonstrate a strong foundation in one or more of the following areas:

- Original research and data-driven analysis
- Development or application of conceptual or theoretical frameworks
- Policy analysis or evaluations of development programs
- Comparative or cross-regional studies
- Forward-looking insights grounded in lessons learned or emerging trends

We welcome interdisciplinary perspectives and encourage submissions that bridge knowledge and practice to deliver real-world impact on the SDGs.

Please carefully read the instructions and guidelines provided in the abstract submission form before completing your submission. *This includes format requirements, evaluation criteria, timelines and other important information.*

2. Partnerships

- **Partners Expression of Interest Deadline: 17 October 2025.**
  Become our Partner: https://event.unitar.org/form/3uirc-partners-eoi

We are proud to announce **Çağ University (Türkiye)** and **Loughborough University** as the two first confirmed partners of the 3rd UNITAR International Research Conference (3UIRC).

UNITAR continues to welcome expressions of interest from universities, foundations, research centres, and civil society organizations to join us as partners in this global dialogue. Together, we can amplify impact, bridge knowledge and action, and drive meaningful progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals.

3. Editoral Board

- **Editorial Board Expression of Interest Deadline: 17 October 2025.**
  Join our Editorial Board: https://event.unitar.org/form/3uirc-editorial-board-eoi

For the special volume of the Third UNITAR International Research Conference (3UIRC) UNITAR invites expressions of interest to join the Editorial Board for the peer-reviewed volume linked to the Third UNITAR International Research Conference (3UIRC). Members will support abstract selection, peer review, and overall editorial development.

Please read all instructions carefully in this form: https://event.unitar.org/form/3uirc-editorial-board-eoi, before submitting your expression of interest. The form includes important information about UN publication standards and other mandatory requirements. To apply, kindly complete and submit your expression of interest using the same form mentioned above.

The editorial process for this preliminary phase is led by:
· **Editor-in-Chief:** Dr Jon-Hans Coetzer (*Jon-Hans.COETZER@unitar.org*)

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