

# UNU-IAS and AEON Environmental Foundation to Expand Cooperation on Global Sustainability

On 15 May 2024, the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS) and the AEON Environmental Foundation signed a Memorandum of Understanding on collaboration to advance global sustainability, including the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Both organizations will promote joint research on global challenges and solutions by leveraging their knowledge and networks. They will implement a new programme aimed at developing youth leadership to take action on environmental problems and to become the next generation of global leaders.

The MOU includes collaboration in the following areas:

1. Joint research on Satoyama Initiative;
2. Capacity development for youth;
3. Awareness raising and outreach; and
4. Other joint activities in line with objectives of the MOU.

## Background

### The AEON Environmental Foundation

The AEON Environmental Foundation was established in 1990 by Takuya Okada (currently Honorary Chairman and Advisor of AEON Co., Ltd.) as Japan's first independent corporate foundation focusing on the global environment, in line with AEON's basic principles "Pursuing peace, respecting humanity, and contributing to local communities, always with the customer's point of view as its core." Since its establishment, the foundation has implemented a variety of projects, such as tree planting, including at the Great Wall of China, grant and assistance programmes, as well as environmental education and award programmes. Currently the foundation is working to create new *satoyama* forests with the aim of building a more sustainable future for local communities in Japan.

In 2021 the AEON Environmental Foundation joined the International Partnership for the Satoyama Initiative (IPSI), for which UNU-IAS serves as the Secretariat. Since then, the AEON Environmental Foundation has been conducting various activities including restoration and conservation of *satoyama* landscapes through tree planting. In the field of environmental education, the AEON Environmental Foundation has been actively conducting capacity development programmes for the next generation of environmental leaders, and hosted the Asian Students Environment Platform (ASEP) for ten years.



## The United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS)

UNU-IAS was established in 2014 as an institute of the United Nations University (UNU). Its mandate is to produce evidence-based knowledge and solutions to inform policymaking and address priority issues that are of concern to the United Nations, its Peoples, and Member States. Based in Tokyo, Japan, UNU-IAS integrates expertise across four thematic areas: governance for sustainable development, biodiversity & society, water & resource management and innovation & education. The institute also offers master's and doctoral degrees, postdoctoral fellowships, and innovative short courses, in close collaboration with leading universities in Japan and other countries. Additionally, UNU-IAS contributes to activities promoting youth engagement such as Japan Youth Environmental Activity Contest for high school students. UNU-IAS recently launched a postgraduate degree specialization on the Paris Agreement on climate change.

## About the International Partnership for the Satoyama Initiative (IPSI)

IPSI is an international partnership established in 2010 during the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP10) in order to undertake and facilitate a broad range of activities to implement the concepts of the Satoyama Initiative. As of June 2024 IPSI has 314 members. UNU-IAS serves as the IPSI Secretariat. It supports and promotes the activities of the Satoyama Initiative, including strengthening collaboration among IPSI members and partners, as well as advancing efforts contributing to the realization of societies in harmony with nature. Since joining IPSI in 2021, the AEON Environmental Foundation has been contributing to environmental and biodiversity conservation through tree planting, restoring *satoyama* landscapes and supporting the sustainable development of local communities in Japan.

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