

March 16, 2026

United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability
AEON Environmental Foundation

Global Youth MIDORI platform 2026 — Call for University Student Participants

UNU-IAS and the AEON Environmental Foundation are pleased to announce that applications are now open for university students to participate in the Global Youth MIDORI platform (GYM) 2026 training programme.

GYM aims to strengthen the capacity of youth to address global environmental challenges related to biodiversity and climate change, and to support their participation in international decision-making processes. Through expert lectures and discussions with youth from around the world, participants explore approaches to tackling these challenges from diverse perspectives.

The 2025 GYM international training programme engaged 15 university students from eight countries, selected from a total of 2,657 applicants. A speech contest selected two outstanding participants, who joined the UNU-IAS delegation to the 2025 UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP30) in Belém, Brazil in November 2025. They participated in several side events, gained valuable insights and exchanged views with youth, researchers, government officials, local practitioners and other stakeholders from across the globe.

This year, the international training will be held online during 4–7 August. The three winners of a speech contest on the final day will participate in an International Study Visit in Tokyo on 26–29 August 2026. This visit will include participation in the 9th MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity*¹ Laureates Forum, hosted by AEON Environmental Foundation. Participants will also engage in exchanges with practitioners and researchers in the fields of biodiversity and climate change, and site visits highlighting circular economy initiatives.

¹ *About the MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity

In collaboration with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, AEON Environmental Foundation established the MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity in 2010 on the occasion of the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP10), held in Japan, and the 20th anniversary of the Foundation's establishment. The Prize is an international award that honours individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the realization of a sustainable society. It also aims to raise broad awareness of the importance of biodiversity while promoting and expanding the environmental activities of the laureates. To date, 21 individuals from 20 countries have been recognized.

Programme Overview

Programme Date & Time: 4–7 August 2026, 09:30 – 17:30 (JST)

Format: Online

Language: English

Number of participants: 20 students

Fee: Free

How to apply: Application details will be available [here](#) during the application period

Application period: 10–24 April 2026

Background

AEON Environmental Foundation

AEON Environmental Foundation was established in 1990 by Takuya Okada (Honorary Chairman and Advisor, AEON Co., Ltd.) as Japan’s first corporate foundation dedicated to global environmental issues. The foundation was created based on AEON’s fundamental philosophy: “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 worked with a wide range of stakeholders and carried out activities centered on four core areas: tree planting, grants, environmental education and collaborative research, and awards. Through its awards program, the foundation supports international environmental conservation efforts. At the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP16), held in Colombia, the foundation presented the MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity to youth from the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Peru. In the field of environmental education and collaborative research, the foundation co-hosts the “AEON SATOYAMA Forum” with universities to share new insights on sustainable *satoyama* and promote discussions on the future of *satoyama*. These initiatives provide opportunities for learning about environmental issues and help nurture the next generation of environmental leaders. The foundation is also currently engaged in new *satoyama* initiatives aimed at realizing sustainable local communities.

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), whose mission is to contribute to solving urgent global challenges of concern to the United Nations and its Member States. Based in Tokyo, UNU-IAS promotes research in four areas: Governance for Climate Change and Sustainable Development, Biodiversity and Society, Water and Resource Management, and Innovation and Education. It also offers master’s and doctoral degree programmes, a range of innovative short courses and postdoctoral fellowships. These fellowships provide outstanding early-career researchers, especially those from developing countries, with opportunities to engage in advanced research on sustainability in cooperation with host researchers in Japan.



Contacts

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