3rd International Conference on Higher Education Institute Challenges Solutions for Sustainable Development Goals 2024

Organized by

Centre for Research in Environment, Sustainability Advocacy and Climate CHange (REACH), Directorate of Research, SRMIST, Kattankulathur

Association with

National Institute of Ocean Technology, Ministry of Earth Sciences, Chennai

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1. *Introduction:*

SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST), Kattankulathur, has made notable contributions to the global pursuit of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Understanding the pivotal role of educational institutions in promoting sustainability, SRMIST has launched various initiatives aimed at increasing awareness among students, researchers, and the broader community. A key highlight of SRMIST's efforts is its annual **International Conference on Sustainable Development Goals (ICSDG)**, which serves as a collaborative platform for students, academics, policymakers, and industry experts from around the world. Through this event, SRMIST not only aligns its mission with global sustainability objectives but also fosters innovation and leadership in addressing critical global challenges. The ICSDG 2024 continued this tradition, bringing together a diverse group of participants to discuss practical solutions for a sustainable future.

In December 2024, SRMIST's Centre for Research in Environment, Sustainability Advocacy, and Climate Change (REACH), under the Directorate of Research, hosted the ICSDG in collaboration with the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Chennai. This three-day event, held from December 3rd to 5th, 2024, attracted over 850 attendees, including students, researchers, policymakers, and industry leaders from various countries. The conference focused on advancing the 17 SDGs, which address global issues such as poverty, hunger, climate action, and responsible consumption. ICSDG 2024 offered a unique opportunity for knowledge-sharing, networking, and collaboration among key sustainability stakeholders. The event included 12 international conferences, 3 workshops, 2 training programs, and 3 hackathons, each targeting specific sustainable development challenges and encouraging participants to think critically about innovative solutions. Additionally, it facilitated meaningful industry-academia discussions on sustainability, resource management, and green energy. ICSDG 2024 emphasized knowledge-sharing and practical solutions, highlighting the significance of interdisciplinary collaboration and the critical role of young researchers in fostering sustainable innovation. The event was a major milestone in promoting global sustainability efforts.

All seventeen SDGs and name of Convenor and hosting departments

2. Day 1

2.1 Inauguration

The conference commenced with a presidential address by **Prof. C. Muthamizhchelvan**, Vice Canceller, SRMIST, followed by a series of keynote speeches from notable leaders in sustainability and development. The Chief Guest, **Dr. M. Rajeevan**, former Secretary of the Ministry of Earth Sciences and current Vice Chancellor of Atria University, Bengaluru, delivered the keynote address. Among the distinguished guests were **Ms. Martine Aamdal Bottheim**, Deputy Ambassador of the Royal Norwegian Embassy in New Delhi, and **Mr. Jiro Kodera**, Counsellor for Economy & Development at the Embassy of Japan in India.

ICSDG 2024 inaugural function with respective delegates like Prof. C. Muthamizhchelvan, The Chief Guest, Dr. M. Rajeevan, Vice Chancellor of Atria University, Bengaluru, Ms. Martine Aamdal Bottheim, Deputy Ambassador of the Royal Norwegian Embassy,Mr. Jiro Kodera, Counsellor for Economy & Development at the Embassy of Japan in India, Dr. Purnima Jalihal, Scientist – G, National Institute of Ocean Technology, Prof. B. Neppolian, Dean (Research), and Prof. Paromita Chakraborty, HEAD, REACH, Directorate of Research, SRMIST

2.2 Panel Discussions

The event also featured several panel discussions on pressing issues such as climate change, the interdependence of marine and terrestrial ecosystems, and gender equality in the digital era. A particularly impactful panel discussion, titled ***"Sustainable Futures: Insights***

from Experts on Hotspot Topics in Sustainability," included experts from Norway, Japan, and India. Panelists such as **Mr. Andreas B Schei**, Counsellor for Climate and Environment at the Embassy of Norway, and **Mr. Siddharth Hande**, CEO of Kabadiwala Connect, shared practical insights on achieving sustainability in business and academia. Additionally, **Mr. Jiro Kodera** and **Dr. Venkatesan R**, former Scientist G at NIOT and Professor of Practice at Anna University, engaged in meaningful discussions with students and research scholars, offering valuable perspectives on sustainability activities.

Panel discussions on "Challenges in Achieving sustainable development Goal- A way forward"

3. Day 2

3.1 Parallel Sessions

As a Part of ICSDG conference, several departments at SRMIST are engaged in a range of initiatives that contribute to the advancement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Among these, the Institute of Hotel Management (IHM) runs a noteworthy Skill Development Program aimed at bridging the gap between local communities and the hospitality industry. This program provides training in hospitality management to local individuals, helping them access better job opportunities and contributing to the local economy. Furthermore, IHM has organized community outreach initiatives, such as food distribution at the IGM Children's Home in Guduvanchery.

Institute of Hotel Management conducted Skill Development Program & served food for children in IGM Children's Home

The School of Public Health has launched another groundbreaking initiative—the University Wellness Program (UWP). This program combines practical learning with theoretical modules to promote wellness and sustainability on campus. Monthly events and campaigns are held to raise awareness of public health issues, while art competitions engage students in discussions on topics like the built environment, climate change, and health.

School of Public Health & Faculty of Science and Humanities conducted various activities among school and college students

The Department of Electronics and Communication Engineering also contributed by organizing a Gender Equality Awareness Rally, followed by a program promoting a safe digital environment for women Safai Karamcharis. Additionally, they hosted a pre-conference event at a rural government high school to educate younger generations about gender equality.

School of Electrical and Electronics organized Gender Equality Awareness Rally followed by awareness program on promote safe digital ecosystem for Women Safai Karam Charis and outreach awareness program on rural government high school community to educate the young generation about gender equality

3.2 Workshops, Hackathons, and Interdisciplinary Efforts:

ICSDG 2024 featured numerous workshops, hackathons, and interdisciplinary projects to foster innovation and problem-solving related to sustainable development. The 'Hackfinity' hackathon, for example, focused on developing solutions to enhance the quality of education. Additionally, an inclusive learning fair was organized for differently-abled students. These events offered participants an opportunity to showcase their creativity and collaborate on projects with the potential to make a lasting impact on their communities. SRMIST not only encourages students to demonstrate their creative ideas through model demonstrations but also makes efforts to implement these ideas in real-world applications.

For **SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation)** and **SDG 14 (Life Below Water)**, SRMIST's REACH underscores its commitment to environmental sustainability through various water management initiatives. Panel discussion on "Balancing Life: Above and Under the Sea" highlights the interdependence of marine and terrestrial ecosystems, the impact of human activities on biodiversity, and the need for sustainable practices. Innovative bioprocesses in marine life, nanotechnology's impact on aquatic ecosystems, and advancements in aquaculture research were discussed and explored.

Panel discussions on "Balancing Life: Above and Under the Sea"

Student presentations were organized in collaboration with the Department of Physics and Nanotechnology, as well as the Department of Mechanical Engineering. Students shared their research through oral and poster presentations, with three winners being selected from each category.

SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), which aims to ensure access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy by 2030, was addressed through various workshops and research initiatives. Participants were introduced to concepts like Ecological Footprint, Green Building, and Ecological Accounting, and they were exposed to clean and green energy options in different contexts. The Department of Electrical and Electronics Engineering, along with the Department of Mechanical Engineering, jointly hosted a series of workshops on energy, covering topics such as the need for renewable energy resources, Green Energy Innovation for Sustainable Development, sustainable urban design for affordable green energy, and alternative fuels.

Conferences and outreach programs play a pivotal role in advancing **SDG 13 (Climate Action)**, with REACH leading numerous tree plantation and environmental awareness programs that also involve local communities. To support **SDG 15 (Life on Land)**, SRMIST conducted various initiatives, including a training program for farmers that focused on soil chemistry, soil preparation techniques, and basic agricultural technologies to improve crop productivity. Additionally, an awareness program was held for school students on modern farming practices, which included technical sessions for both students and faculty, facilitated by the College of Agricultural Sciences, to discuss advanced agricultural research and sustainability.

Following lab-scale demonstrations and the dissemination of knowledge to students, the next crucial step is to socialize the outcomes, which is essential for sustainable progress. To facilitate this, a Bootcamp was held that brought together innovators, industry experts, and academia to explore sustainable industrial growth, innovative solutions, and resilient

infrastructure. The event emphasized the role of technology and innovation in achieving sustainable development, featuring an engaging activity designed to highlight the significance of trust and calculated risk-taking in entrepreneurship.

Subsequently, the Faculty of Management hosted a conference that gathered delegates from business, government, and academia to discuss and implement how circular models—such as recycling, remanufacturing, and extending product lifecycles—can drive sustainable job creation, enhance productivity, and contribute to long-term economic resilience. Themed around *"Circular Economy Principles to Enhance Organizational Efficiency, Create Sustainable Job Opportunities, Build Partnerships, and Identify Policies for Inclusive, Green Growth,"* the conference explored innovative ways to achieve economic growth while minimizing resource use and environmental impact.

Additionally, the School of Architecture and Interior Design organized workshops and panel discussions focused on sustainable urban design and the use of alternative fuels. These sessions highlighted the importance of green energy innovations in reducing carbon footprints and promoting sustainable growth in urban areas. Invited talks and presentations addressed the development of inclusive, sustainable, and resilient urban environments, offering insights into innovative strategies, best practices, and collaborative approaches for building sustainable cities and communities.

The **SRM School of Law** played a key role in organizing these events, offering a platform for legal scholars and practitioners to exchange insights and engage in discussions that drive tangible change. The conference had a strong international focus, featuring contributions from global experts. Topics ranged from human rights issues to the structural integrity of institutions, all aimed at exploring how peace and justice can be integrated into the sustainable development agenda.

This event also fostered collaborations between national and international organizations, further highlighting SRMIST's growing role as a hub for sustainability research and education. Discussions emphasized the critical need for multi-sectoral partnerships to tackle complex issues related to governance, climate action, and human rights.

School of Law conducted rally on "Promoting LGBTQ+ Rights and Inclusion" and Fashion Ramp Walk on valedictory

4. Day 3: Valedictory

First session also ran as parallel events for the respective SDG team and afternoon common valedictory ceremony were conducted. In the valedictory session the Chief Guest was **Prof. Balaji Ramakrishnan, Director, National Institute of Ocean Technology**, and **Dr. J. R. Moses, CEO, Hubert Enviro Care System Pvt. Ltd** was the guest of honour**.** The event began with a ramp walk and fashion parade by FSH students showcasing outfits made from recycled materials. This was followed by a prize distribution ceremony, recognizing awardees from each SDG for their achievements in various competitions, including oral and poster presentations of research ideas, school-level contests, and slogan competitions, all aimed at promoting SDG goals among students.

Prize distribution for awardees for their innovative ideas on SDG based research and project formulation

Afterward, there was a felicitation of the convenor, co-convenors, and student ambassadors of each SDG. Dr. R. Suriyaprakash, event Secretary & Scientist at REACH, provided an overview of the event, and Dr. Paromita Chakraborty, Event Chair and Head of REACH, expressed heartfelt gratitude to the entire team for their dedicated efforts in supporting the UNSDGs.

*During the valedictory session, **Prof. Balaji Ramakrishnan**, Director, National Institute of Ocean Technology as Chief Guest was, and **Dr. J. R. Moses**, CEO, Hubert Enviro Care System Pvt. Ltd was the guest of honour, Dr. Purnima Jalihal, Scientist – G, National Institute of Ocean Technology, and pro VC FSH, Dr. Santhanu and Prof. Paromita Chakraborty, HEAD, REACH, Directorate of Research, SRMIST*