

Southern Synergy : U75 unites campuses for Net-Zero – a regional workshop for universities & higher education institutions



Kattankulathur, 25th Sept. 2023: SRM Institute of Science and Technology in collaboration with Green Terre Foundation hosted the U75: Net Zero University Campus Regional Workshop to sketch the roadmap for actions towards carbon neutrality. The event aims to equip higher education institutions with the knowledge and tools needed to create carbon-neutral campuses. The chief guest of the event was Honourable MP Shri. Prakash Javadekar, Former Minister of MoEFCC, MHRD and M(I&B). The workshop boasted a lineup of distinguished speakers and thought leaders sharing their expertise and insights on various aspects of achieving net-zero campus goals. The event began with a warm welcome from Prof. C. Muthamizhchelvan, Vice Chancellor of SRM Institute of Science and Technology.

In his welcome address, the Vice Chancellor spoke at length about the ill effects of extensive exploitation of nature and how climate change has affected harmony in nature. “SRMIST has constituted a centre for excellence by the name of ‘Centre for Research in Environment,



Sustainability Advocacy and Climate Change (REACH)’ for the very reason of tackling the multitude of environmental problems that are plaguing humanity”, he said.

The Vice Chancellor detailed that SRMIST has over 4500+ publications related to UN SDGs and has been entrusted with prestigious projects on lithium battery research and

electric mobility by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy as well as the Department of Science and Technology. He also elaborated on the fact that SRMIST is one of the lead members in the “India-Norway cooperation project in capacity building for reducing plastic and chemical pollution in India (INOPOL)”. Prof. Muthamizhchelvan also enlisted the

numerous SDG related activities undertaken in terms of environmental management for which SRMIST was awarded the prestigious ISO 14001:2015 accreditation. He ended his speech by saying “The Earth does not belong to us - but we belong to the Earth”.

Following his welcome address, the context and background overview was elaborated by Dr. Rajendra Shende, Founder Director of Green TERRE Foundation and former Director of UNEP. Dr. Shende said that measuring impact is necessary to understand how our actions to safeguard the earth have made a change. He suggested that campuses be considered as ‘living laboratories’ and all efforts to minimise emissions and achieving net-zero needed to be digitised.

The keynote address from Hon. Prakash Javadekar, MP, set the stage for discussions on India's path to carbon neutrality and global youth's role in achieving this goal.



In his speech, Mr. Javadekar lauded the universities in Tamil Nadu & Kerala that came together to discuss the roadmap for becoming carbon neutral. During his tenure, he initiated this netzero campus movement including activities such as renewable energy, energy efficient usage, electric mobility alongwith water and wastewater as well as waste management practices. “Investing in such measures will return dividends in a very short time period of 3 to 5 years. It also allows for value and wealth creation within universities. Universities should not be pollution centres like industries but knowledge centres creating the next generation of youth who will take up

the baton in future. It is the need of the hour to support such initiatives and I welcome SRMIST for hosting the workshop which will create the workshop leading to carbon neutrality in these 75 universities."

A highlight of the event was the speech, delivered online, by Erik Solheim, former Under Secretary General of the United Nations and former Environment Minister of Norway. His inspiring words on "Global Youth for



Net Zero" struck a resonant chord, emphasizing the pivotal role of the youth in driving sustainability efforts worldwide. He appreciated the lead taken by Govt of Tamil Nadu on

climate change and global lead of PM Modi to implement Mission LiFE-Life Style for Environment.

The workshop featured a series of illuminating presentations on critical topics, including "Open Access Data for Net Zero in University Campus" by Dr. Bhanu Neupane-Project Advisor at UNESCO, "Not Zero-Net Zero: Key Criteria for Accreditation System" by Dr. Anil Sahasrabudhe, Chairman of National Educational Technology Forum (NETF), and the National Board of Accreditation (NBA).

The presentations by experts from Ministry of Energy, research institutes, UNDP-UNEP, and Business associations as well as from Green TERRE Foundation inspired the students and faculty of the universities to take early action.

Dr. Gufran Beig, Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee Professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies and Founder of Safar India, delivered into the realm of "Digital Technologies to measure, manage, verify GHG emissions and accelerate Net Zero," offering a glimpse into the technological frontiers of sustainability.

Girija Shankar, General Manager at Energy Efficiency Services Ltd, Ministry of Energy, shared critical insights on "Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy: Financial Models for Universities/HEIs." Sandeep Narang, representing the Council for GEM-Green Building Certification Programme, ASSOCHAM, enlightened the audience with a comprehensive overview of "Making 'Green-Buildings' in Campus for Net-Zero."



The case study of Net-Zero University in campus and the key challenges phase-wise work needed by the university by drawing the roadmap for carbon neutral campus starting with base-line survey was presented by Kanagaraj Ganesan, alumni of IIT Madras and UNDP expert. Ar Durga Kamat explained role of Green TERRE Foundation as partner with the universities by presenting digital dashboard, online App, guidelines and the tool kit at every stage of journey towards Net Zero.

Finally a talk on "Environmental Management System & Climate Change Actions" was delivered by Dr. S. Gopinath, Asst. Professor and Management Representative of ISO 14001:2015 at SRMIST. The workshop featured interactive sessions and expert insights on open access data for net-zero campuses, accreditation criteria, technologies for net-zero campuses, digital tools for measuring GHG emissions, energy efficiency, renewable energy,

green building case studies, and much more. A moderated Q&A session engaged students and faculty, allowing for meaningful dialogue and shared perspectives.