

UNESCO Chair for Dialogues on Sustainability

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The concept of sustainability, namely the ability of human populations to achieve or maintain a satisfactory lifestyle over time without degrading the environment, is at the center of the Chair's activities. Society needs critical information to manage the interconnected environmental and societal risks emerging from the current global environmental changes. It is therefore imperative to develop a reciprocal interaction between science and society in order to deliver the knowledge needed for action at local to global scales. In this context the UNESCO Chair for Dialogues on Sustainability aims to advance sustainability science in the face of global environmental change and foster social dialogues on sustainability issues.

Forum and Observatory of Sustainability

The UNESCO Chair for Dialogues on Sustainability builds on the strong links existing between McGill University and Panama, and proposes to advance sustainability education, research and social dialogues in Panama and in Canada by creating a Forum and Observatory of Sustainability (FOS) active in both countries. The objectives of the FOS are to:

- (i) Develop and promote the adoption of dashboard of sustainability indicators in Panama,
- (ii) Compile and provide access to documents containing information of national significance on environmental issues relevant for sustainability in both countries,
- (iii) Open permanent discussion spaces allowing participants to analyze and discuss current

sustainability issues on the basis of scientific evidence as well as propose and evaluate solutions in order to develop sustainability options. In Panama, the FOS is organized around the Urban, Forest and Water Observatories. In Canada it spearheads the Sustainable Canada Initiative.

(iv) Disseminate information and communicate with a broad audience promoting science-based evidence for sustainability in both countries.

Education for Sustainable Development

The Chair will participate in the training of the next generation of leaders with scientifically sound and culturally adequate knowledge of sustainability. This is critical if sustainability is to become a fundamental component of human and social development. In Panama, the education component of the Chair pays special attention to the challenges faced by indigenous and rural communities whose livelihoods depends on the extraction of natural resource and by poor urban dwellers.

Partners

The UNESCO Chair for Dialogues on Sustainability was elaborated as a partnership between McGill University and three Panamanian Institutions: Instituto de Investigaciones Científicas y Servicios de Alta Tecnología, Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute and Universidad Católica Santa Maria la Antigua.