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Peter Messerli named co-chair of UN Global Sustainable Development Report

Peter Messerli, Professor of Sustainable Development at the University of Bern, has been selected as co-chair to lead the group of scientific experts tasked with drafting the upcoming UN Global Sustainable Development Report. Former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed Peter Messerli and Endah Murniningtyas from Indonesia to serve as co-chairs. The first report is slated for release in 2019.

Before leaving office at the end of 2016, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed a group of 15 eminent scientists and experts to draft the Global Sustainable Development Report on behalf of the UN. The group is tasked with providing scientifically founded guidelines for implementation of the recently adopted Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, comprising economic, social, and environmental aspects.

Published every four years, the report is intended to strengthen the science–policy interface and to provide an evidence-based tool to assist policymakers in combatting poverty and promoting sustainable development. “Science plays a central role in the exploration of interactions between sustainability goals,” says Peter Messerli of the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) of the University of Bern, new co-chair of the group. “Potential conflicts and synergies must be brought to light in order to identify possible development pathways.” For example, interactions between increased food production and the protection of biodiversity could be identified in order to harmonize corresponding policy measures.

Recognition for Swiss sustainability science

“The appointment of Peter Messerli as co-chair is an honour for Switzerland and a sign of recognition for Swiss sustainability science,” says Michael Gerber, Ambassador and Special Envoy for Global Sustainable Development at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). The FDFA supported Peter Messerli’s application to the UN group.

The University of Bern has pursued the topic of sustainable development for several years in line with its Strategy 2021. In so doing, it has supported not only specialized research centres, but also several global research networks such as “Future Earth” that generate knowledge on societal transformation processes. “These new forms of inter- and transdisciplinary research are immensely important in the search for possible solutions to global sustainability challenges,” says Christian

Leumann, Rector of the University of Bern. “We are very pleased that Peter Messerli, who has played a major role in research for sustainable development at the University of Bern, has now been appointed to this globally esteemed position.”

Career sketch of Professor Peter Messerli

A native of Bern, Peter Messerli studied and obtained his doctorate at the Institute of Geography of the University of Bern. His research interests lie in the sustainable use of land systems in Asia and Africa, against the backdrop of globalization and global change. In addition, he is concerned with theoretical and conceptual questions of sustainable development, inter- and transdisciplinary research approaches, and evidence-based policies and decision-making processes. In the course of his research activities, he has spent more than 10 years in Madagascar and Laos as well as in other countries of the global South.

In 2010, Peter Messerli was named director of CDE upon its foundation as a strategic interdisciplinary research centre of the University of Bern. As Professor of Sustainable Development, he teaches at both CDE and the Institute of Geography. He is also a member of the Board of Trustees of the Forum for Climate and Global Change (ProClim) of the Swiss Academy of Sciences. At the international level, he is co-chair of the international research network “Global Land Programme” of Future Earth and represents CDE in other networks devoted to sustainable development. In 2015, he was chosen by the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences as a scientific representative of the Swiss delegation that participated in negotiation of the new global development agenda at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in New York.

Sustainability science at the University of Bern

The University of Bern conducts – with an international focus – high-quality disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary research and teaching in the area of sustainability. Through its centres of excellence Oeschger Centre for Climate Change Research (OCCR), Centre for Development and Environment (CDE), and World Trade Institute (WTI), the university makes important contributions to research on climate change (OCCR), to clarification of the effects of global change on natural resources and human life (CDE), and to the sustainable regulation of international trade (WTI). In addition, it has established a research unit for digital sustainability in the area of information systems.

Information on the Global Sustainable Development Report:

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/globalsdreport/2019>

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