



Global University Associations Forum
Press statement

GLOBAL UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATIONS FORUM

PRESS STATEMENT

From 4-5 September 2023, the 2nd annual meeting of the Global University Associations Forum (GUAF) was convened in Bangkok, Thailand, under the chairmanship of the ASEAN University Network (AUN). The Forum saw the participation of university associations from the Americas, the Arab region, China, India, Southeast Asia, and Europe.

Established in the wake of the Covid-19, GUAF was designed to serve as a platform of collaboration and information exchange amidst the disruption of mobility introduced by the pandemic. At the 2nd GUAF annual meeting, members looked back at the higher education's experience during the pandemic and addressed the changes, the transformation, and the transition that arose in its aftermath. The event covered a wide array of topics, including:

1. **International Mobility and Recognition:** GUAF members discussed the utilisation and benefits of virtual student mobility following the Covid-19 pandemic and a joint statement in support of UNESCO Global Recognition Convention. The Forum recognised the importance of recognition as an enabler of academic mobility and internationalisation.
2. **Sustainability as a Theme of /Mode for International Partnerships:** GUAF members explored potential partnerships and possible collective actions for its sustainability efforts.
3. **Limitations on International Collaboration - the Impact on Institutional Autonomy & Academic Freedom:** The Meeting continued its deliberation on safeguarding academic freedom and institutional autonomy at a global level. It agreed on the importance of the matter and noted down the development of the agenda for further discussion.
4. **Digitalisation and the Future of Education:** GUAF members discussed the pivotal role of digitalisation and artificial intelligence (AI) in the aftermath of the covid-19 pandemic, sharing insights and strategies for higher education to adapt and thrive in the new digital landscape. There is a clear need for more exchanges, and also for working towards a common framework and shared ethical principles to ensure the AI

and other emerging technologies are used in research and education in an integer and ethical fashion.

5. **Research and Curriculum Development:** GUAF recognised the need for reforming academic careers, seeking to ensure fair recognition of the diverse contributions that academics bring to their institutions, their academic communities and to society. This is also an opportunity for a reflection on core academic values.

Throughout the event, participants shared valuable insights and knowledge on developments in their organisations and regions. The forum highlighted the importance of consensus-building and collective action in addressing the evolving challenges and opportunities in higher education.

As the 2nd GUAF annual meeting concluded, its participants expressed their commitment to continue working together to shape the future of higher education for the benefit of students, researchers, and society at large. GUAF sets a promising trajectory for future collaboration and initiatives that can contribute to the advancement of higher education on a global scale.

The third annual meeting of the Forum will take place in autumn 2024 in Beijing, China, under the chairmanship of CAHE. In the interim, members will continue to convene virtually to establish next steps for implementing priority actions.

About the Global University Associations Forum

The Global University Associations Forum was conceived in 2020 in response to the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic to international higher education and research collaboration. It was established to complement the ongoing exchange and collaboration initiatives developed by universities, and their national networks and associations. It will identify pathways for joint action to further enhance links between university associations and their relationships with member institutions. In addition, the Forum will advocate for the vital role of partnerships as a vehicle for pursuing joint actions within and across regions.

The Global University Associations Forum is constituted by the following organisations:

Africa	Association of African Universities (AAU)
Arab region	Association of Arab Universities (AArU)
China	China Association of Higher Education (CAHE)
Europe	European University Association (EUA)
India	Association of Indian Universities (AIU)
Latin America & the Caribbean	Latin American & The Caribbe an Space for Higher Education (ENLACES)
North America	American Council on Education (ACE) & Universities Canada (UC)

Southeast Asia	ASEAN University Network (AUN)
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As a collective voice, the Forum will work towards achieving consensus by engaging in dialogue. Through joint statement and action, it will contribute to the advancement of the sector both in regional and global terms.

The next physical meeting of the Forum will take place in autumn 2024 in Beijing, China, under the chairmanship of CAHE. In the interim, members will continue to convene virtually to establish next steps for implementing priority actions.