

**Report on the Times Higher Education (THE) Eurasia Universities
Summit 2025**

September 24-25, 2025, Baku, Azerbaijan

by

Erandathie Lokupitiya,

Professor in Environmental Science, Department of Zoology and Environment Sciences.

University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

November 2025

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Introduction

The Times Higher Education (THE) Eurasia Universities Summit 2025 was held in Baku, Azerbaijan, with the theme 'Adaptation and Mitigation in practice: Local and Global Level innovations'. The participants and resource persons of the event included university leaders, policymakers and researchers from across Europe and Asia and a key focus of the Summit was to explore how transnational research can drive social and economic progress.

The event was organized by the THE in partnership with the Ministry of Science and Education and the State Agency for Science and Higher Education of Azerbaijan. This landmark THE summit provided the participants with opportunities for collaboration, networking opportunities, and exchange of knowledge and experience. The event was attended by over 300 participants, and it was rich with informative keynote speeches, interactive panel discussions, and science-policy dialogue.

The key themes of the Summit included the following:

- How collaborative research across Europe and Asia can help tackle global challenges
- The role of higher education in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Collaboration and innovation in higher education

Conference Sessions and contents covered during the two days (September 24-25, 2025)

Day 1 (September 24, 2025)

Opening ceremony

The Day 1 started with an opening ceremony rich with cultural items from Baku, Azerbaijan, and speeches, including the Minister of Science and Education of the government of Azerbaijan and Phil Batty, Chief Global Affairs Officer of the THE.

Keynote speech

The keynote speech on harnessing transnational research for achieving global progress was delivered by Norbert Scizmadia. In his speech he emphasized how the collaborative efforts within the Eurasian countries can benefit in achieving sustainable development.

Technical Sessions of Day 1

The Technical sessions of Day 1 were held on several themes promoting the building of cross-border research networks, and transnational education, along with informative panel discussions and workshops on how such collaborations can help tackling global challenges, role of universities in regional development, university-industry innovation, and social innovations within the Eurasian countries, etc., etc. The participants were provided with networking opportunities during the interactive panel- and intimate discussions and separate networking events.

Day 2 (September 25, 2025)

Keynote speech

The keynote speech of the day was delivered by Phil Baty and Olgun Cicek, in way of an interactive discussion and it was on how quality assurance can drive universities' contributions to the SDGs. The importance of integrating SDGs into curricula, SDG-aligned impact reporting, the potential role of quality assurance in linking universities with the governments, industries, and the society, etc., was discussed in detail.

Technical sessions of Day 2

Panel discussion on how Eurasian universities are driving climate action

It was the first panel discussion of the day and the panelists included the following (including myself):

Aitan Poladova, World Bank (Moderator)

Rufat Azizov, Rector, Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University

Mohsen Sherif, Provost, United Arab Emirates University

Erandathie Lokupitiya, Professor in Environmental Science, University of Colombo

As a panelist representing Sri Lanka and University of Colombo, I explained how the University of Colombo has been contributing to transnational collaboration in research and outreach activities including the dissemination of the findings of such research. In exemplifying the collaborative research, I emphasized the outcome of the APN-funded regional collaborative research project (CRRP2016-09MY-Lokupitiya) for determining the best agricultural practices in salt-affected paddy areas in South Asia, a project conducted in collaboration of three other countries in the region (i.e. Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan), in which I served as the Principal Investigator. The impact of such collaborative efforts in driving university level climate action was emphasized. The role played by the University of Colombo in sustainable practices and efforts to estimate carbon footprint and carbon stocks, etc., and emission reduction efforts and

climate change education through both undergraduate- and MSc programme/s were also discussed, for which positive comments and commendations were received. Two photographs from the panel discussion are included below:



Panel discussion on how universities drive climate action (From left to right, Aitan Poladova, Rufat Azizov (Azerbaijan), Mohsen Sherif (United Arab Emirates), and Erandathie Lokupitiya (Sri Lanka))




Describing climate action by University of Colombo and the impact of collaborative research projects, particularly the APN-funded collaborative research project involving four South Asian countries.

Overall outcome and benefit/s of the Eurasia Universities Summit:

The Eurasia Universities Summit 2025 ended providing valuable opportunities for the participants to network and develop partnerships targeting the impact rankings and research collaborations for regional sustainable development. Overall, the Summit was a great success with lot of information and knowledge sharing, and it was a pleasant and well-attended event, generating more avenues for transnational collaborative research and education. It provided me with the opportunity to share information on collaborative research I have been involved in, and the panel discussion I participated in helped sharing and dissemination of information relevant to the outcome of the APN-funded collaborative research project, which studied the best agricultural practices suitable for salt-affected paddy soils in South Asia.

Annexe 1

Some extracts from the web site for Eurasia Universities Summit

HOME AGENDA SPEAKERS COMMUNITY LOCATION PARTNERS ▼

Day 2: 25 Sept, 10:15 AM - 11:00 AM GMT +4 / 11:45 AM - 12:30 PM Your local time (45 Min)

How Eurasian universities are driving climate action

Auditorium

With climate change as a pressing global issue, universities across Eurasia are leading initiatives to advance sustainability through research and policy engagement. This panel will explore cross-continental collaborations, industry partnerships and student-led activism.

- How can Eurasian universities lead climate action through research collaboration?
- What models exist for academia-industry-government partnerships on sustainability?
- How can students be empowered to drive sustainability on campus and beyond?

Rate Session ♡♡♡♡♡

Panel discussion

Speakers



Aytan Poladova
Environmental Compliance Specialist
World Bank
Moderator



Rufat Azizov
Rector
Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University



Mohsen Sherif
Provost
United Arab Emirates University



Professor Erandathie Lokupitiya
Professor
University of Colombo

Part of the Day 2 Agenda including the panel discussion on climate action

All days

Day 1: 24 Sept

Day 2: 25 Sept

All Sessions (1/7)

My Interests

My Registered Sessions

Day 2: 25 Sept

8:30 AM



8:30 AM - 9:45 AM GMT +4 / 10:00 AM - 11:15 AM Your local time (1 Hour, 15 Min)

Check-in

Auditorium Corridor

9:00 AM



9:00 AM - 9:45 AM GMT +4 / 10:30 AM - 11:15 AM Your local time (45 Min)

Data masterclass | Leveraging the THE Sustainability Impact Ratings for universities in Central Asia and the Caucasus

How can universities in Central Asia and the Caucasus demonstrate their commitment to sustainability while enhancing their global reputations? This masterclass delves into the *THE Sustainability Impact Ratings*, the world's only performance tables evaluating universities



Klara Spustek

Data Delivery Manager, THE Sustainability Impact Ratings
Times Higher Education



Times Higher Education
**Sustainability
Impact Ratings**

9:45 AM



9:45 AM - 10:15 AM GMT +4 / 11:15 AM - 11:45 AM Your local time (30 Min)

Keynote | How quality assurance can drive universities' contributions to the SDGs

Auditorium

Universities play a pivotal role in achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but their impact depends on how effectively sustainability is embedded into institutional governance, teaching, research and outreach. As Vice-President of the Central and



Phil Baty

Chief Global Affairs O...
Times Higher Educati...
Moderator



Olgun Çiçek

Board Director
International Networ...

10:15 AM



10:15 AM - 11:00 AM GMT +4 / 11:45 AM - 12:30 PM Your local time (45 Min)

How Eurasian universities are driving climate action

Auditorium

With climate change as a pressing global issue, universities across Eurasia are leading initiatives to advance sustainability through research and policy engagement. This panel will explore cross-continental collaborations, industry partnerships and student-led activism.



Aytan Poladova

Environmental Comp...
World Bank
Moderator



Rufat Azizov

Rector
Azerbaijan State Oil a...



Mohsen Sherif

Provost
United Arab Emirates...



**Professor
Erandathie
Lokupitiya**

Professor
University of Colombo

11:00 AM



11:00 AM - 11:30 AM GMT +4 / 12:30 PM - 1:00 PM Your local time (30 Min)

Networking break

Auditorium Corridor