

## Sophia University UNESCO Chair Newsletter Vol. 2

February 2026 Issue

### **Greetings from UNESCO Chair Holder Miki Sugimura**

We are pleased to present the second issue of the Sophia University UNESCO Chair Newsletter. This edition looks back on our activities in 2025 and highlights the key developments of the year. As the second year since the establishment of the Chair, 2025 was marked by our active participation in a wide range of networks both in Japan and abroad. It was also a year of major events: in July, Sophia University hosted the Nobel Peace Prize Commemorative Symposium, and in December, the National UNESCO Schools Conference was held. We would like to express our sincere gratitude for your continued cooperation and support.



**Miki Sugimura**  
UNESCO Chairholder  
Sophia University

### **Sophia University UNESCO Chair 2025 Activity Review**

As we stride into 2026, this volume of the UNESCO Chair Newsletter would like to take a moment to review the activities that Sophia University and the Chair holder Professor Miki Sugimura had supported throughout 2025.

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## 15<sup>th</sup> April 2025: Visit by Georgetown University’s Institute for Women, Peace, and Security Delegation to meet Women Scholars

The academic year was kicked off by a visit from Georgetown University’s Institute for Women, Peace, and Security (GIWPS) delegation, including Ambassador Melanne Vermeer, Director of the Institute. President Miki Sugimura, Chancellor Sali Augustine and Vice President for Global Academic Affairs Mariko Iijima, together with professors from Sophia University and the delegation’s members, discussed topics of gender roles, diversity, as well as various projects presented by both parties.

Both universities have a close and long-standing relationship, with both institutions being founded by the Society of Jesus, Sophia University’s first exchange student to go abroad being to Georgetown University in 1935, leading to a Student Exchange agreement being signed in 1975. The session concluded with the members exchanging views regarding the promotion of women’s activities at institutions of higher education and research, and a campus tour by Sophia University’s female students.

Read more: <https://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/article/news/topics/20250513giwps/>

## 13<sup>th</sup> June 2025: Special Lecture by the Republic of Kosovo’s President Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu

President of the Republic of Kosovo, Her Excellency Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu, gave a special lecture titled “Defending Democracy in the 21st Century: Lessons from Kosovo” during her visit to Sophia University on June 13th. The lecture was opened by a welcome address by Professor Miki Sugimura, and facilitation by Sophia University’s Professor Taro Komatsu. President Osmani’s presentation emphasized that democracy is a “decision” that must be chosen by every generation on a daily basis, that “justice” is essential for peace to last, and that democracy must deliver “results” to its people, encouraging the audience to not stop fighting to protect the values of democracy, justice, peace and freedom.

Following the presentation, President Osmani answered questions from the audience regarding the role of education, importance of investing in education, her experiences as a female leader among other topics. The session left the students attending moved and inspired, with a feeling of commitment to action for the future.



Special lecture by President Osmani



The venue was packed with students and faculty

Read more: [https://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/article/news/topics/250620\\_kosovo/](https://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/article/news/topics/250620_kosovo/)

## 26<sup>th</sup> June 2025: Career Development and Graduate School Pathways for Female Students

Sophia University organized the “Career Development and Graduate School Pathways for Female Students” seminar on June 26th, addressing a question held by students studying in the humanities of whether to pursue graduate studies or not - a question that stems from the uncertainty regarding employment prospects for graduate students in Japan. The speakers, including master’s program alumni and corporate representatives, shared examples of how their graduate school experiences contributed to their professional lives.



This seminar was supported by the 30% Club Japan University Group, and the event was closely aligned with the UNESCO Chair’s theme of “Education for Human Dignity, Peace, and Sustainability”.

Read more: <https://sophia-unescochair.jp/en/topics/20250807/>

## 28<sup>th</sup> June 2025: 61<sup>st</sup> Japan Comparative Education Society (JCES) Annual Conference Public Symposium “Rethinking the Internationalization of Universities: How Mobility is Transforming Campuses”

As part of the 61st Japan Comparative Education Society (JCES) Annual Conference, Professor Miki Sugimura joined as the designated discussant for the public symposium titled “Rethinking the Internationalization of Universities: How Mobility is Transforming Campuses”. Held in Teikyo University, President Yoshifumi Okinaga opened with a keynote speech emphasizing internationalism being a founding principle of the institution, and the various internationalization measures that have been implemented at the university.



Professors Hirota Hiroshi, Akiba Yuko, and Yoshida Kazuhiro gave presentations from their unique perspectives accompanied by Professor Sugimura’s discussion and comments, paired with questions from the floor that resulted in a lively and thought-provoking symposium.

Read more: <https://www.gakkai.ne.jp/jces/letter.html> (only available in Japanese)

## 15<sup>th</sup> July 2025: Visit by Stéphanie Obertin, Minister for Research and Higher Education of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and University of Luxembourg

On July 15<sup>th</sup>, the Minister for Research and Higher Education and Minister of Digitalisation of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Stéphanie Obertin, visited Sophia University as part of an official mission to Japan. This mission's goal is to aid in the national strategies for data, artificial intelligence (AI) and quantum technologies as part of the "Accelerate Digital Sovereignty 2030" in Luxembourg.



Sophia University, being a long-time partner of Luxembourg and the University of Luxembourg with the latter housing one of Sophia University's overseas offices, welcomed Minister Obertin together with members of the Luxembourg Ministry for Digitalisation, Ministry of Research and Higher Education, the Luxembourg National Research Fund (FNR), Luxembourg Institute of Health (LIH), Luxembourg National Data Service (LNDS), Luxembourg Institute of Science and Technology (LIST), University of Luxembourg, and the Deputy Head of Mission, Anne Moes, from the Luxembourg Embassy in Japan. Discussions focused on student exchange programs and academic cooperation, with Professor Miki Sugimura and Tomoe Yoshino, Director of the Office of Global Education and Collaboration, providing an overview of the history of collaboration with the University of Luxembourg.

To compliment the discussion of initiatives in AI, data science and digital green technology, student perspectives were provided by Ph.D. students studying at Sophia University who completed their Master's studies at the University of Luxembourg's Master in Social Sciences and Education Sciences (MASSES). The meeting concluded with a friendly discussion among all participants and a symbolic exchange of gifts between President Miki Sugimura and Minister Stéphanie Obertin, expressing intent for further collaborations going forward.



Read more: [https://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/article/news/topics/250930\\_luxembourg/](https://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/article/news/topics/250930_luxembourg/)

## 20<sup>th</sup> July 2025: 9th U.S.-Japan Digital Innovation Hub Advanced Technology Workshop

Following this visit, Sophia University had the pleasure of hosting the 9th U.S.-Japan Digital Innovation Hub Advanced Technology Workshop, which highlighted U.S.-Japan collaboration in research security and talent development in Critical and Emerging Technologies (CET).



With over 100 participants, the workshop discussed topics of building collaborative frameworks between academia, industry, and government in the field, as well as the issues of balancing economic security with academic freedom and innovation. The overall program included keynote speeches, panel discussions, student poster presentations and a networking reception that helped to build toward future U.S.-Japan cooperation.



Read more: [https://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/article/news/topics/250930\\_dih/](https://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/article/news/topics/250930_dih/)

## 27<sup>th</sup> July 2025: Nobel Peace Prize Conference in Tokyo: “Responding to the Threat of Nuclear Arms”

On July 27th, Sophia University had the honour of co-hosting the Nobel Peace Prize Conference in Tokyo “Responding to the Threat of Nuclear Arms” together with the Nihon Hidankyo (Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations), organized by the Norwegian Nobel Institute for the first time outside Norway.



Moderated by Professor Naoki Umemiya of the Sophia University Center for Global Education and Discovery, the conference began with an address by Chancellor Sali Augustine, followed by the keynote speech by the Chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, Jørgen Watne Frydnes, titled “Upholding the Nuclear Taboo – a Call to Humanity”. Chair Frydnes concluded his speech with a call to action addressed to the students attending: “To the young people in this room: You are the future custodians of this memory.”



Following this call, Mr. Terumi Tanaka and Ms. Michiko Kodama gave speeches that told the history of the Nihon Hidankyo, as well as childhood memories of being a 7-year-old survivor from Ms. Kodama’s perspective. As an interlude, the Sophia Philharmonic Orchestra performed “Eine Kleine Nachtmusik”, connecting to the panel discussion segment of the session. The bilingual panel discussion featured Director of the Norwegian Nobel Institute, Kristian Berg Harpviken, Vice Chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, Asle Toje, Professor Nobumasa Akiyama, Professor Keiko Nakamura, and Sophia University’s Professor Taro Komatsu. Through simultaneous Japanese-English interpretation, the discussion focused on topics of modern geo-political tensions, international order, going beyond peace education to disarmament education, and future areas to focus on with hope.

Read more: <https://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/article/news/topics/nobel2025/>

### 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2025: Global Leadership Program Hosted at Sophia University



Between August 3<sup>rd</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup>, Sophia University hosted the 2025 Global Leadership Program, which invites students attending Jesuit universities from various countries in Asia to participate. Led by Professor Naoki Umemiya and supervised by Professor Mikiko Sugiura and Professor Sachie Miyazaki, students from Sophia University were joined by students

from Sogang University, Ateneo de Manila University, Fu Jen Catholic University, Sanata Dharma University, Ateneo de Davao University, Ateneo de Zamboanga University, Instituto Sao Joao de Brito, Ricci Hall of The University of Hong Kong, and Xavier Learning Community.

Following the introductions of each institute by the students, Professor Miki Sugimura gave a keynote lecture to all the students and visiting staff on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and International Education. This lecture focused on cross-border cooperation, using examples of Kurashiki Kojoike High School's initiatives in Okayama prefecture, or the JPTI6 Sustainable Development Consortium organized by Shizuoka University. The activities by the Sophia UNESCO Chair were emphasized, particularly in its cooperation with UNESCO, as well as other UNESCO Chairs and the UNITWIN Network.

Concluding the presentation, Professor Miki Sugimura created time to interact with the students and staff of the participating institutions, who were eager to take pictures, exchange greetings and ideas during this short time.

Read more: [https://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/article/news/topics/250902\\_glp/](https://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/article/news/topics/250902_glp/)

## 20<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> August 2025: Sophia University Activities at The 9<sup>th</sup> Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 9)

Throughout August 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>, Sophia University supported the 9<sup>th</sup> Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD9) through its involvement in events on both days: the 2<sup>nd</sup> Model African Union, and the “Intergenerational Dialogue on the Next 10 Years of Education in Africa” symposium.

### The General Assembly: 2<sup>nd</sup> Model African Union in Japan

The 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the Model African Union in Japan was co-hosted by Sophia University, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), under the support of the African Union Commission (AUC). The model union provided Sophia University students with opportunities for engagement, with two undergraduate students joining as part of the Executive Committee, and ten students joining as rapporteurs, engaged in minute-taking and facilitation of discussion between Japanese and international students. The approximately 140 participating students prepared by compiling policy documents and visiting embassies of their assigned countries, which allowed them to engage in passionate discussions that strengthened the connections between Japan and Africa.



To conclude the session, Professor Miki Sugimura highlighted the importance of the university as an “intellectual platform” for international dialogue and the university’s

commitment through academic cooperation to strengthen Japan-Africa collaboration in her closing ceremony speech.

Read more: [https://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/article/news/topics/250909\\_mau/](https://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/article/news/topics/250909_mau/)

#### Intergenerational Dialogue on the Next 10 Years of Education in Africa Symposium

The 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the conference featured the “Intergenerational Dialogue on the Next 10 Years of Education in Africa” symposium to close out the day, moderated by Sophia University’s Professor Tetsuo Kondo and Professor Miki Sugimura as one of the panelists.

The initial keynote speech by Sophia Ashipala, Head of the AU Commission, highlighted the need of flexibility from education systems to be able to respond to vast technological and climate change. Director of UNESCO-IICBA, Quentin Wodon, added additional stress on the importance of a continued investment in education.

The latter half of the session featured the roundtable discussion featured Secretary-General of the Nigerian National Commission for UNESCO, Olawale Lateef Idowu Olagunju, Executive Director of AFTRA, Steve Nwokeocha, International Christian University’s Professor Mikiko Nishimura, Sophia University’s Professor Miki Sugimura and Human Rights Advocate Ms. Aïssata Tindé. Their discussion covered a plethora of emerging topics and pressing challenges, including data management, teacher salaries, removing barriers from education, collaboration between communities and teachers, and drawing examples from each other’s regions in the bilateral Japan – Africa relationship.

The thought-provoking session concluded with an engaging Q&A session, with not only scholars and university students, but also school students asking about issues of language diversity and online tools including Artificial Intelligence.



Read more: [https://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/article/news/topics/250911\\_cesa/](https://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/article/news/topics/250911_cesa/)

## 27<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> August 2025: The 10th International Conference on Global Citizenship Education (10th IConGCED)

The 10th International Conference on Global Citizenship Education (10th IConGCED) was held in Seoul, South Korea, from August 27 to 28, 2025. The conference was co-organized by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, and it was held in partnership with UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP), and Chungnam National University BK21 Four Center for GCER. The overall theme of this year's conference was "Democracy in the Post-Truth Crisis: The Role of GCED." Key issue areas to be considered at the conference sessions included:

- How does GCED contribute to empowering the future citizens of democratic societies?
- How do innovative pedagogical approaches, resources, and learning environments for GCED enhance education for active and mature civic engagement in support of deliberative democracy?
- What types of policies, governance structures and partnerships are needed to restore social cohesion and trust, and advance a culture of peace through GCED?

The objectives of the conference were 1) To contribute to emergent discourses around transformative education and GCED; 2) To explore and discuss challenges and possibilities of translating GCED into practice; 3) To share innovative programmes, pedagogies, practices, and lessons learnt with a wide range of interested stakeholders; and 4) To strengthen levels of commitment, solidarity, and cooperation among all GCED stakeholder. Professor Miki Sugimura participated as a speaker in Concurrent Session 2C Special Session on UNESCO 2023 Recommendation: Education for Peace.



Read more: <https://www.unescoapceiu.org/post/5418?ckattempt=1>

## 21<sup>st</sup> October 2025: Visit by Honorable Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, India

Honorable Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, India, H.E. Mr. Pema Khandu, visited Sophia University's Yotsuya Campus on October 21<sup>st</sup>, joined by members of parliament and representatives from the Embassy of India in Tokyo.

During discussions of the new Department of Digital Green Technology opening in April 2027 with Sophia University Chancellor Sali Augustine and President Miki Sugimura, the Minister expressed hopes that more students would choose Japan as a study destination in addition to currently popular western countries, adding that interest in studying in Japan has grown as of late.

Assistant Professor Emir Yilmaz of Sophia University's Department of Engineering and Applied Sciences brought the guests through a lab tour with explanations given by Sophia University students engaged in research, with the visit concluding as both parties expressed their intent to continue promoting academic exchange between Arunachal Pradesh and Japanese universities.



Read more: [https://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/article/news/topics/251024\\_ap/](https://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/article/news/topics/251024_ap/)

## 28<sup>th</sup> October 2025: Lecture by H.E. Petra Sigmund, German Ambassador to Japan at Sophia University

In late October, Sophia University hosted the German Ambassador to Japan, H.E. Petra Sigmund, in her lecture "From China to Japan". This lecture was primarily co-hosted by Sophia University's European Institute together with the Department of German Literature, with Professor Mechthild Duppel as the moderator of the session.

During her opening address, Professor Miki Sugimura pointed out that this visit was made possible by a request from a student of the German Literature program's graduate department, becoming another chapter in the long history between Sophia University and Germany.

Ambassador Petra Sigmund's presentation covered various topics, ranging from her experiences as a female diplomat and general diplomatic career, to her past experiences studying abroad and beyond. The session stressed the history and importance of German – Japanese relations and concluded with a lively Q&A session that expanded upon the various topics introduced.



Read more: [https://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/article/news/topics/251105\\_dg/](https://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/article/news/topics/251105_dg/)

## 6<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> October 2025: 24<sup>th</sup> Sophia University United Nations Weeks “Considering the World and Our Future Through UN Activities”

The 24<sup>th</sup> Sophia University United Nations Weeks took place between October 6<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup>, coinciding with the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations. October 24<sup>th</sup> marked a celebration, with the “UN’s 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and Participation report of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai” symposium being held, opened by Director of the United Nations Information Center, Ms. Kaoru Nemoto, who addressed the role and purpose of the United Nations complimented by a video message of greetings by the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres.



United Nations Assistant Secretary-General, Mr. Maher Nasser, took over by stressing that as international landscapes change due to conflicts between democracy and authoritarianism, there is a dire need for global coexistence. This was followed by a panel discussion that focused on Japan’s contribution to these issues and the United Nations’ ability to address recent challenges, moderated by Professor Tetsuo Kondo.

A week later, on October 30<sup>th</sup>, the “Psychosocial Care for Children and Youth after Conflicts and Disasters – Peacebuilding through Creative Activities and International Exchange” symposium took place, highlighting case studies from Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Japan, with experts of each country being present.



For the Ukrainian case, Professor Dmytro Sherengovsky, Vice-Rector of the Ukrainian Catholic University, discussed psychosocial needs

in wartime, stressing the role of universities in being able to help children overcome trauma and realizing their roles as agents of renewal. The Bosnia and Herzegovina case was complimented by Professor Larisa Kasumagić-Kafedžić, Associate Professor of the University of Sarajevo, providing commentary through the history of her country’s education system, and the importance of not ignoring the role of education in peacebuilding. This case was further illustrated by Bosnian painter and visual artist Muhamed Kafedžić, who highlighted the peacebuilding potential of art, having created a collaborative painting with Sophia University students that was exhibited on campus.

The Japanese case was complimented by clinical psychologist Ms. Ryoko Honda, who shared her experiences of therapeutic play workshops in disaster-affected areas. Finally, Sophia University’s Professor Taro Komatsu brought the cases together by reporting on online international exchange activities between students of the three countries, adding that these experiences enabled the students to share experiences and foster deep mutual empathy.

Read more: <https://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/article/news/topics/unweeksoctober2025/>

## 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2025: International Seminar “Next Generation Leaders Development: Our mindsets and visions for peace and sustainability”

This seminar’s aim was to examine how education, the media, and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can influence and shape our mindsets and visions in addressing complex global challenges, particularly in ASEAN countries and Japan. It explored the potential of these three sectors to foster positive change among young leaders and, ultimately, the wider public, thereby promoting universal human values—including peace, human rights, and equality—and contributing to a more peaceful and sustainable future. The seminar also sought to strengthen strategic partnerships among these sectors by bringing together diverse collaborative networks, including PBD, Kyoto University, Chulalongkorn University, Café Bongiorno, AUN, and AUN/SEED-Net.

The seminar was held on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2025 at the Kasem Suwankul Meeting Room, 13th Floor, Building 3, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand, and was delivered both onsite, through social media services and other online platforms. Miki Sugimura delivered a keynote speech titled “*Nurturing Mindsets of Peace, Human Rights, and Sustainability through Education.*”

Read more: <https://www.aunsec.org/news/aun-partners-kyoto-university-and-chulalongkorn-university-advance-leadership-peace-and-sustainability>

## 6<sup>th</sup> December 2025: 17th UNESCO Associated Schools National Conference

The 17<sup>th</sup> UNESCO Associated Schools National Conference was held in Sophia University, with educators and students from UNESCO Associated Schools gathering on Yotsuya campus on December 6<sup>th</sup>. This year’s theme of “Education and Learning Aimed at UNESCO Schools: Reflections Based on the 2023 UNESCO Recommendation on Education” was accompanied by a symposium, poster sessions and workshops aimed at the various participants.

The morning started off with opening remarks by the Director of International Planning at the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), Miho Kobayashi, followed by an introduction of initiatives by UNESCO Associated Schools introduced by Assistant Director-General for International Coordination at MEXT, Ms. Hiromi Ikutame. After introductions, Professor Miki Sugimura, who was a member of the International Expert Group that first drafted the revised proposal, gave a keynote speech and started off the morning’s panel discussion, joined by the Principal of Tama Municipal Renkouji Elementary



School and two UNESCO school students. This panel included a thorough discussion of various initiatives and experiences of the panel members and warmed up all participants for the remaining workshops and poster sessions to follow.

The afternoon session featured poster sessions and workshops divided into 5 groups throughout Sophia University's Yotsuya campus, with Sophia University graduate and undergraduate students working together to lead a student-oriented workshop titled "Building Harmony Through Diversity: What International Exchange Means to You". The workshop included presentations from three graduate students based on their international perspectives and experiences studying in an international university in Tokyo. The presentations' themes included Ghana's culture and Luxembourg's multilingualism, complimented by a Japanese student's experience of navigating the international environment of Sophia University coming from a different prefecture. Following the presentations, the participants were randomly distributed into one of three groups, where they created posters within a given time limit, presenting them to close out the poster session.

The UNESCO Chair team greatly thanks all students for their great efforts in participating in this workshop, and all undergraduate students that supported the workshop to ensure smooth operations.



Read more: <https://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/article/news/topics/unesco2025/>