

Observer status for NUS at UN climate talks

THE National University of Singapore (NUS) has become the sixth organisation and only university from the Republic to be admitted as an “observer” to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The status allows NUS to attend all international climate change negotiation sessions held under the convention, and gives it an official channel to provide input to both the convention and the Singapore Government.

The UNFCCC is a framework for intergovernmental efforts to tackle climate change. It has near universal membership, with 195 nations and the European Union having ratified the convention, including Singapore.

Professor Chou Siaw Kiang, executive director of the NUS Energy Studies Institute, said many researchers at the university already work closely with national agencies which deal with Singapore’s carbon emissions.

“The status is a great opportunity for learning and to be ‘plugged in’ to the international network for like-minded researchers involved in the climate change negotiation process,” he said.

“It would also... enhance research collaborations around technological, legal and policy solutions to address climate change.”

The university intends to hold a series of workshops on the subject, including on mitigation and adaptation technologies, international and comparative law, and policies needed. It will also send research staff to climate meetings this year, including the pivotal one in Paris, France, in December.

Each year, the UN organises a conference where the members review measures that have been taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that lead to climate change.

The Paris meeting is especially significant as the countries are due to adopt a new global climate deal that cuts the emissions.

This deal, which is expected to take effect by 2020, will further the UN’s goal of limiting global warming to 2 deg C more than pre-Industrial Revolution levels.

Scientists have said that, given the current emission trends, earth is on track for double that increase, which is likely to cause disastrous droughts, storms, floods and rising sea levels.

The other five Singapore organisations with observer status are the Singapore Environment Council, the National Youth Achievement Award Association, green company Avelife, the Asia-Europe Foundation and the Nexus Carbon for Development, a global alliance of organisations and people supporting green projects.

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