

09 November 2015



UNV Executive Coordinator Richard Dicus speaking with China Volunteerism Federation Founding Chairman, Mr Qi Liu about the importance of the spirit of volunteerism in China. (UNV, 2015)

## International volunteering conference taps South-South volunteering potential

The United Nations Volunteer (UNV) programme and the Beijing Volunteer Service Federation (BVF) co-hosted the first International Volunteer Service Exchange Conference on 12-13 October, in Beijing, China. The conference focussed on the role of volunteering as a driving force to support international and South - South Cooperation in the context of the new post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

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The conference focussed on the role of volunteering as a driving force to support international and South - South Cooperation in the context of the new post-2015 sustainable development agenda. The two-day conference featured speakers from leading volunteer involving organisations, foreign ministries, national volunteer programmes, international NGOs and the UN, as well as participants from six continents.

During his Opening Remarks, UNV Executive Coordinator, Mr Richard Dictus, noted "it is time that middle-income-country advocates of volunteerism also take an even stronger role in leading towards sustainable development together with the United Nations. UNV stands ready to accompany this journey."

The sheer scale of international and national volunteer programmes among participants demonstrated the potential for volunteering to be a driving force for the new Global Goals for Sustainable Development. For example, over 250,000 national volunteers are mobilised in Nigeria each year; 50,000 international volunteers have been deployed by the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA); and 2 million volunteers are registered in Beijing.

Participants developed a network for ongoing information sharing and a platform for knowledge exchange. Exciting new partnerships were forged between participating Middle Income Countries, and opportunities for further engagement on areas of shared interest were identified. Several strong themes emerged from plenary and group discussions, including the potential for knowledge exchange, reciprocal volunteering and joint programmes.

UNV was called upon to continue convening these discussions, to keep momentum behind volunteering as a transformative means of achieving the new Global Goals, particularly in Middle Income Countries. UNV welcomes the opportunity to continue to work with these stakeholders to harness the potential of volunteerism, and to create new spaces for innovative volunteering partnerships.

To see an overview of the main themes, key questions and future steps from the conference, [read the International Volunteer Service Exchange Conference report](#).

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Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)