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**CIRCULAR**

**To**  
**All Vice Chancellors of Technical Universities and**  
**All Directors/ Principals of AICTE Approved Institutions,**  
**Subject: Empowering Youth for Carbon Neutrality National Movement-U75**  
**Making Campuses living-laboratories for Net Zero**

Respected Sir/Madam,

In a world where life threatening climate change is no longer a distant threat but a pressing reality, students and faculty from universities and higher education institutions are stepping up to the plate.

In years after COVID 19, the world witnessed unprecedented disasters and loss of human lives caused by massive floods, unabated wildfires, deluge of landslides and life-threatening heatwaves. The month of July was the hottest month in the history of mankind.

Just a month after that, India witnessed an inspiring event that exuberated the hope, the way world experienced when vaccine was developed for dealing with Corona virus.

It was a day long gathering of determined youth of 30 universities in India. Unlike what we see in the international climate conferences, they came together not to protest by shouting ‘not enough is being done about climate crisis’ but for demonstrating how ‘more can be done to address climate challenge’. They were inspired by PM Narendra Modi’s Mission Life (Lifestyle for Environment) and his ambitious commitment for mitigating emissions by use of renewable energy.

That was 19<sup>th</sup> August 2023. Place was iconic heritage building of Savitribai Phule Pune University (SPPU) in Maharashtra. Focal points -one from student group and one faculty of each of 30 universities of Western India started drafting a road map for carbon Neutrality-Net Zero. This down-to-earth workshop was part of the U75-a national movement and part of global network of universities called Smart Campus Cloud Network (SCCN) of the Green TERRE Foundation, an organizer of the movement.

The representatives of the universities who had given official consent to act on climate crisis at Vice Chancellors’ level, were guided in the workshop with inspiring words by mentors to the movement, Prakash Javadekar, former Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and

Erik Solheim, former Minister of Environment of Norway and Under Secretary General of United Nations.

‘Even though India has not contributed significantly to climate change, as global citizen and family member of the Earth (Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam) we have responsibility to act’, said Prakash Javadekar while flagging of the climate action. ‘Empowering Campuses for a sustainable future is visionary approach of Green TERRE Foundation as it puts youth in the drivers seat on the road to Net Zero’, stated Erik Solheim in his video speech. The event marked a pivotal moment in India’s journey towards sustainability, offering hope and inspiration in the face of the global climate crisis.

U75: Net-Zero is the movement launched in the first year after 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of India’s independence. ‘Technology Innovation for accelerated emission-reduction is essential to achieve Net Zero. That would be triggered in the campus through participation of youth in U75’, stated Prof T G Sitharam, Chairman of AICTE-All India Council of Higher Technical Education, who was also the Chief Guest for the workshop. He also highlighted the demographic advantage of India with the largest youth population which is conducive to innovations.

University Grant Commission, Niti Aayog, National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) have supported the Net-Zero movement by the universities. “Net Zero movement in campus is Green Skill Building exercise”, said Prof Anil Sahasrabudhe, Chairman of NEFT while addressing the Universities.

‘The movement is a clarion call for early action. It beckons universities to begin the action in their own campus and build their green skills through hands-on experience to embrace global ambitions to achieve net-zero emissions’, said Dr Rajendra Shende, IIT alumni, former Director of UNEP and Coordinating lead author of IPCC that won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007. Beyond the immediate goal of reducing carbon footprints, it emphasizes the critical role of higher education institutions in molding future leaders equipped to confront the most formidable environmental challenges of our time. This movement recognizes that universities are not just centers of learning; they are the crucibles to mold the minds of climate -leaders of tomorrow.

One of the unique aspects of the movement is its hands-on approach, particularly beneficial for students to train them in Green Skills -the pivotal need of the future. In addition, the event promoted practical guidance on development and deployment of Net-Zero technologies.

The regional workshop provided a vibrant platform for diverse stakeholders—university leaders, educators and students. Sustainability experts from UNDP, Ministry of Energy, ASSOCHAM presented best practices and case studies from other university campus to provide comprehensive understanding of the Net-Zero concept.

Piloting the emission reduction strategies in campus need tools and advisory services. Experts from GTF presented digital platform developed for online and real-time measurement and monitoring of emissions, sharing and partnering of innovative practices through cloud networking, and use of AI and IoT for cost savings.

India's pledge to attain net-zero carbon emissions by 2070, articulated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at COP26 in Glasgow, UK underscores the nation's determination to combat climate change. In this context, higher education institutions take center stage for molding the future-ready policy makers. It also takes the clues from National Education Policy 2020 that promotes Sustainable Development Goals.

The key outcome of the workshop also revealed a fact that Net Zero results in cost-saving for universities and rotating fund can be created to support initial investments in the campus. That itself would be the financial model for India for Net Zero.

The workshop showcased how universities can become role models of environmental stewardship by behavioral change, energy efficiency, renewable energy and carbon offsetting through tree plantation in campus and beyond the campus.

More regional workshops would follow to cover all 100+ universities across the country who have consented to act on Net Zero campus.

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**With regards,  
Yours sincerely,**

**(Dr. Mamta Rani Agarwal)**