

Welcome to Birmingham City University from the Vice Chancellor and the Pro Vice Chancellor of Research

Last year the university launched our *Strategy 2030 and Beyond* through which we established three focal pillars: (1) Develop talent for tomorrow, (2) Create knowledge for good; and (3) Power prosperity. Our institutional ideology is reflected in us being 'Rooted in Birmingham' and what we achieve here through our teaching, innovation, and practice, equips our staff and students to 'Reach Beyond.'

We are a university which focuses upon meeting the needs of our community through providing learning opportunities and professional training to help our students meet the challenges facing them today and where life will lead them tomorrow.

The Centre for Human Rights is an exemplar in this regard. We are proud of the work that the CHR has achieved in raising awareness of the United Nations in our region, creating staff and student opportunities for engaging with the UN, and providing over 1,500 of our students with simulated experiences for solving local and global problems.

The UPR Project at BCU has achieved great success. The project lead is Centre Associate Director Dr Alice Storey, and since its creation in 2019, Dr Storey, Professor Yorke, along with Dr Amna Nazir, have led the submission of 45 Stakeholder Reports in 43 different UN member state's UPR, involving more than 50 BCU law students in the co-creation of these reports. This is a phenomenal achievement in which they have acted to help safeguard a host of human rights issues in each of the world's continents. Their work has been recognised as good practice in both the Human Rights Council and by UN Special Procedures.

Therefore, we are proud to host this conference on a very important initiative of the United Nations. We are well aware of some of the challenges the world faces but we are also aware that we are still to find some of the answers on how to deal with these challenges.

At Birmingham City University we aspire to be an academic institution which provides educative forums to discover how to meet such challenges. It is clear that the UN's *Pact for the Future* is a necessary inter-governmental agreement to help create a sustainable and peaceful world.

It is also clear that universities, and conferences like this one, are crucially important for us to generate the necessary knowledge to help us all have a sustainable future.

We are honoured to host you today for this discussion on such an important issue. We welcome the world leading experts that will be contributing to our two panel discussions, and for delivering our Keynote Address, our esteemed gratitude to Her Excellency, Dr Fatou Bensouda, High Commissioner of Gambia to the United Kingdom.

A wholehearted welcome to you all.

We wish you all good luck in your contributions.

Thank you.

Professor Maxine Lintern
Pro Vice Chancellor of Research, Birmingham City University