



MEDIA RELEASE

Contact: Lynn Honeysett

(until 9/19): 1 (914) 576-7747 LBH222@aol.com

Contact: Coimbra Sirica

until 9/19: 1 (631) 757 4027 csirica@aaas.org

(from 9/20-9/28): Hotel Rio Othon Palace: (21) 2525 1500

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ICSU Scientific meetings probe global issues

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil – Science for sustainable development, energy, strengthening science in developing countries, and ensuring global access to scientific data are among the topics to be discussed by international delegates at the 27th General Assembly of the International Council for Science (ICSU). In sessions open to the press on Wednesday, 25 September 2002 (time/location indicated below), ICSU members will debate these topics prior to implementing decisions and/or resolutions in the formal voting sessions later in the week.

Each four-hour session will be chaired by leading experts from the area under discussion and will provide opportunity for several international scientists to present their views and opinions. The sessions are designed to generate open discussion of a broad spectrum of ideas. Individual scientists may be available for interviews following the morning and afternoon sessions.

All delegates and the press are invited to attend a special afternoon session devoted entirely to discussion of *Science in Brazil*, sponsored by the Brazilian Academy of Sciences (ABC).

Parallel Morning Sessions

09:00 – 13:00

1. Science for Sustainable Development

Following only three weeks after the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, ICSU delegates are eager to advance their role in organizing a global action plan for science and technology. The Council has already demonstrated its commitment to the political process, and is now intent on further defining the focus of a new ICSU initiative in this area. Presentations will span:

- Food Security
- Global Environmental Change
- Biodiversity
- Geohazards

2. Energy and Sustainable Societies

Energy issues are crucial for the future of this planet. Several countries have suggested that ICSU initiate an energy programme. In addition, some of the ICSU Unions are already working on energy issues that cross many disciplinary borders. As considerable efforts have already been devoted to energy issues around the world, the focus of this discussion will centre on how ICSU can contribute to existing efforts and/or develop new areas of research and development. Within that context, presentations will include:

- Role of Science & Technology in Energy Policy
- Science & Technology for Sustainable Energy Systems
- Challenges to Developing Countries
- Challenges to the Scientific Community
 - Bioenergy
 - Fuel Cells
 - Nuclear Energy

3. Ensuring Global Access to Scientific Data and Information

As technological advances dramatically increase the ability to obtain, store and analyze data, the digital divide between the North and the South is increasing rapidly. As a lead-up to the UN World Summit on the Information Society (December 2003), ICSU members will probe issues that are making scientific data and information more difficult to access—especially for developing nations. For example, research is increasingly being funded by the private sector, and organizations are intent on retaining ownership of their findings or generating revenue from intellectual property rights (IPR). In other cases, governments are looking for ways to commercialize data collected using public funds. At the same time, there is no consensus on how to pay for international and global monitoring systems. Presentations will encompass:

- Collection, Archiving and Dissemination of Global Databases
- The EU Directive on Legal Protection of Databases
- Standardisation and Access to Biological Data
- Should Scientific Information Be Free?
- The Digital Divide: Overcoming the Knowledge Gap
- Information Access in Developing Countries

4. Capacity Building for Science

Nations around the world—both in the South and in the North—are experiencing a dramatic decline in the interest on natural sciences disciplines amongst young students. At the same time, a large proportion of the current generation of scientists is approaching retirement. To complicate matters further, scientists are being pulled in opposite directions: they need to be specialize to compete in cutting-edge disciplinary research, yet broader approaches are needed to deal with problems relevant for society. Some would argue that the scientific divide is even greater than the digital divide. ICSU is exploring various initiatives to strengthen and coordinate efforts amongst its partners to address the issues around developing scientific capacity in all countries. Topics of discussion will include:

- Science Teaching at Primary and Secondary Levels
- Undergraduate Training: Specialization vs. Interdisciplinarity
- Capacity Building and the Third World
- Sustainability of Scientific Networks
- The Challenges of Institutional Support

Afternoon Session

15:00 – 18:00

5. Science in Brazil

This event, organized by the Brazilian Academy of Sciences (ABC), will provide a general overview of the state of the art of science in the country, analyzing the national institutional framework of S&T and discussing future perspectives for the sector. This symposium represents a good opportunity for scientists from abroad and members of the press to become acquainted with research currently developed in Brazil. ABC will use this occasion to present the third edition of *Science in Brazil*, a publication that has already catalyzed many international scientific partnerships, benefiting both national and foreign scientists in a variety of fields, and that will surely be of the greatest interest to all.

All ICSU General Assembly meetings will take place at:

Hotel Rio Othon Palace
Av. Atlantica, 3264
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Please register at the ICSU Secretariat Office on the first floor, where you will be given information regarding the location of each session.

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Founded in 1931, ICSU, the International Council for Science, represents the national science academies and international science unions of more than 90 countries around the world. ICSU works to identify and address major issues of importance to science and society and to promote the participation of scientists, regardless of race, gender, political stance, or country of origin in the international scientific endeavor. The organization encourages dialogue between different scientific disciplines and among scientists from “developing” and “developed” countries. By serving as an authoritative independent voice for international science and scientists, ICSU strives to stimulate constructive debate about matters that are vital to the wellbeing of society.

ICSU

51 Boulevard de Montmorency
75016 Paris
France

Tel.: + 33 1 45 25 08 29

Fax: + 33 1 42 88 94 31