

# Press release

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## Leading French Scientist elected as future President of the International Council for Science

Representatives from over a 100 countries and many scientific disciplines elect their first French female President

**Paris, France:** Catherine Bréchnignac, a world reknowned physicist– has been elected as the future President of the International Council for Science (ICSU). Bréchnignac is known for her research in the area of nanophysics (sub-microscopic particles), one of the hottest areas of technological development and will face new challenges at the helm of ICSU, which is best-known for its major international programmes on global environmental change at the other end of the research spectrum. However, as a former Director General of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) – Europe’s largest national research funding agency – she is no stranger to the disciplinary and geographical mix that distinguishes ICSU.

The ICSU Members, science academies or organizations from 104 countries and 30 international scientific unions, elected Bréchnignac at their triennial General Assembly, which took place in Suzhou, China from 19 to 21 October. She will take up the formal position of President-elect in April 2007 and succeed the current ICSU President, Goverdhan Mehta (Chemistry, India), in October 2008. She will be only the second female scientist, following on from Jane Lubchenco (Marine Ecology, USA, 2003-2005) and the second French scientist to be selected by her peers for this leadership role. Indeed, as ICSU celebrates its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2006, the commitment of France to international science can be traced back to the very first General Assembly in 1931, in which the distinguished French mathematician, Charles-Emile Picard, played a pivotal role.

“ICSU is the premier non-governmental science organization representing the whole world. Its mission - to strengthen international science for the benefit of society - is incredibly important. There was a real buzz of excitement about the new ICSU strategy 2006-2011 that was debated and unanimously approved in Suzhou. This includes ambitious new interdisciplinary initiatives on polar research, natural hazards, access to scientific data, and freedom and responsibility in science. I am honoured and pleased to be elected as the future President of ICSU as it takes on some of the key scientific challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century” said Brechnignac.

Founded in 1931, the International Council for Science (ICSU) is a non-governmental organization representing a global membership that includes both national scientific bodies (104 members) and international scientific unions (30 members).

Through this international network, ICSU coordinates interdisciplinary research to address major issues of relevance to both science and society. In addition, the Council actively advocates for freedom in the conduct of science, promotes equitable access to scientific data and information, and facilitates science education and capacity building.

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See also: [http://www.icsu.org/3\\_mediacentre/GA.html](http://www.icsu.org/3_mediacentre/GA.html) for further information on new ICSU initiatives