

Press release

19 September 2006

Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia inaugurates ICSU's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia. -- The Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, Y.A.B. Dato' Seri Najib Tun Abdul Razak, officially inaugurated a new Regional Office for the International Council of Science (ICSU) today. The inauguration ceremony took place at the Palace of Golden Horses in Kuala Lumpur and was attended by over 200 guests from all over the world, including Malaysia's Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation.

The Office will promote the development of science throughout Asia and the Pacific. It will also help strengthen the voice of developing countries in an international setting and ensure that scientists from the region become involved in those aspects of ICSU's 2006-2011 Strategic Plan that are specially relevant for this area. The newly appointed Director of the Regional Office is Emeritus Professor Mohd Nordin Hasan, a renowned environmental scientist from Malaysia.

"The opening of this office is a truly momentous occasion for ICSU," said Thomas Rosswall, Executive Director of ICSU, based in Paris. "The proposal that ICSU should establish four Regional Offices in and for developing countries met with enthusiastic support at the ICSU General Assembly in 2002. ICSU then invited its National Members in developing countries to consider hosting four Regional Offices around the world. A Regional Office for Africa was inaugurated in Pretoria a year ago and two more offices will be established in the Latin American and Caribbean, and the Arab regions."

Malaysia was chosen to host the Regional Office after consultations with ICSU National Members in Asia and the Pacific. Selection criteria included the host being based in a scientific institution with good links to similar establishments in the region and long-term financial support from the host institution and its national government.

"ICSU was also fortunate in obtaining enthusiastic support from Y.B. Dato' Sri Dr. Jamaludin Bin Dato' Mohd Jarjis, Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation of the Government of Malaysia," explained Rosswall. "His personal engagement has been crucial on the road towards the successful inauguration of the Regional Office. Moreover, the Academy of Sciences of Malaysia (ASM), through its President, Tan Sri Datuk Dr Ahmad Zaharudin Idrus, provided a stimulating environment by offering to host the office and lending the prestige of the Academy. Many fellows and staff of the ASM have been instrumental in getting us to where we are today as well."

The ICSU Regional Committee for Asia and the Pacific, which includes representatives from some developed countries in the region, will be responsible for setting priorities for the Regional Office and guiding their implementation. "The Regional Office and Regional Committee will focus on assisting developing countries and we hope that the more affluent countries in the region will support the endeavours of the Regional Office through financial and other help," said Rosswall.

"We wish the Regional Office much success in serving this region," added Goverdhan Mehta, President of ICSU and Emeritus Professor in the Department of Organic Chemistry at the Indian Institute of Technology in Bangalore. "There are definitive signs of science in Asia forging ahead and we hope that the Regional Office will capitalize on this resurgence and help harness its potential through collaboration for the socioeconomic development of the region. This is a memorable day for ICSU."

Founded in 1931, the International Council for Science (ICSU) is a non-governmental organization representing a global membership that includes both national scientific bodies (107 members) and international scientific unions (29 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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