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## ICSU Insight

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## International Polar Year: A lasting legacy

The legacy of the International Polar Year (IPY) was highlighted recently by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in a resolution on sustainable development in the Arctic Region (see story below). The resolution coincides with the halfway point of the IPY and is an opportune time to revisit the IPY and its intended legacy.

The IPY is an intensive burst of internationally coordinated, interdisciplinary, scientific research and observations focused on the Polar Regions. Thousands of scientists from around the world are involved in more than 200 research projects that integrate natural and social sciences. In recognition of the public interest in the Polar Regions, education, outreach and communication activities have also been integrated into the major research projects. IPY is sponsored by ICSU and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and runs from March 2007 to March 2009.

Our current understanding of the nature and behaviour of the Polar Regions is not advancing fast enough to meet the urgent needs of policy makers to be provided with key information to underpin sustainable development. By stimulating and guiding an intense burst of effort, IPY aims to accelerate progress towards providing the required policy-relevant answers.

But the IPY will provide more than this. Polar science post-IPY should be vastly strengthened and improved with fresh ideas seeded by examining existing and new data and an increased awareness by polar residents, schoolchildren, the general public, and decision-makers worldwide. It is intended that the IPY will leave a legacy of observing sites, facilities and systems to support ongoing polar research and monitoring. And, perhaps the most important legacy will be a new generation of polar scientists—trained and enthused during IPY—driving new discoveries.

There will most certainly be other benefits that are entirely unplanned and will become clear only after the formal IPY period has ended. With key international organizations, including UNEP, recognizing and acknowledging the importance of IPY, the benefits will likely have an impact on the world for many years to come.

For more information on the IPY, visit [www.ipy.org](http://www.ipy.org)

## Planning and Coordinating Research

### UN Environment Programme: Meetings in Monaco

The tenth special session of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, which met in Monaco in February, passed two resolutions of immediate interest to ICSU—sustainable development of the Arctic Region and an International Decade for addressing Climate Change.

In the resolution on sustainable development in the Arctic Region, the Global Ministerial Environment Forum *Requests* Governments, together with the International Council for Science and the World Meteorological Organization, the sponsoring agencies of the International Polar

Year,...to enhance the scientific basis for informed decision-making through the promotion of international scientific collaboration and coordination to better track, understand, and predict Arctic change as a key International Polar Year legacy activity’.

The session also invited the UN to consider an International Decade for addressing Climate Change for the period 2010–20. A [summary of the decisions](#) is available online.

ICSU participated in the [9th Global Civil Society Forum](#) as a new representative of the UNEP Major Group on Scientific and Technological Communities on 19 February. The Executive Director is also a member of the Major Group’s Facilitation Committee that met on 18 February.

During the UNEP meetings, ICSU moderated one ministerial side-event on the science-policy interface and participated in another ministerial discussion on follow-up to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment.

## Human Health

Planning began in January for a [new health initiative](#) focusing on a systems analysis approach to health and well-being in the changing urban environment. ICSU and the Scientific Unions, in partnership with the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis organised a two-day workshop, bringing together around 40 scientists to explore how different disciplinary perspectives and knowledge might be integrated into a systems approach. The first meeting of a core programme Planning Group was convened immediately after the workshop.

## Monitoring gaps in IPCC report

The report [Future Climate Change Research and Observations: GCOS, WCRP and IGBP Learning from the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report](#) is now available. The report comes out of the workshop held in Sydney, Australia, in October last year, which investigated the gaps and uncertainties identified in the Fourth Assessment Report. The findings will guide the three, ICSU sponsored, international programmes—Global Climate Observing System, World Climate Research Programme and International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme—in developing future strategies for climate change observations and research.

## International Polar Year

The third International Polar Day took place on 12 March. The day focused on the changing Earth over geological time, especially the glacial and interglacial periods of the past million years, and cycles of ocean-atmosphere interactions that give rise to regional climate variations on scales of decades to centuries. The next Polar Day is on 18 June and will focus on land and life, including permafrost, terrestrial biodiversity, hydrology and snow. More information on Polar Days and other activities is available on the [International Polar Year website](#).

## Global Observations

The Science and Technology Committee (STC) of the [Group on Earth Observations](#) (GEO) met in Hannover, Germany, in February. The Committee on Space and Research (COSPAR) joined Germany, South Africa and the European Commission as Co-Chair of the STC, following decisions taken at the Fourth GEO Plenary and Ministerial Summit last November. The STC reviewed progress of the GEO tasks relating to climate, water and weather, and discussed the transition of the Integrated Global Observing Strategy Partnership (IGOS-P) to GEO and the role of the STC in this regard. The STC also discussed the draft White Paper on the Data Sharing Principles for the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), which was

prepared by the ICSU Committee on Data for Science and Technology (CODATA). Discussion of this important document will continue at the next STC meeting in Geneva in May.

## Global Change Programmes

### Earth System Science Partnership

The report from the [Review of the Earth System Science Partnership](#) (ESSP) was finalized at the end of February. The report will go to CSPR for approval at its meeting later this month.

### Human Dimensions

The International Human Dimensions Programme (IHDP) became the fourth sponsor of the Earth System Science Partnership (ESSP) joint project [Global Environmental Change and Human Health](#).

The IHDP Open Meeting 2008 [Social Challenges of Global Change](#) will take place in New Delhi, India, 12–15 October. The meeting will incorporate not only general discussion about climate change, but also many other environmental changes which happen in our society: resource shortages, the destruction of ecosystem services and new threats to human health.

### Biodiversity

Hal Mooney took over as Chair of the Scientific Committee for DIVERSITAS in January. He replaces Michel Loreau, who served for two terms, 2002–07, and will act as Past Chair in 2008.

### Climate Research

[Dr Ghassem R. Asrar](#) has been appointed Director of the Joint Planning Staff for the World Climate Research Programme (WCRP). He joins the WCRP following a successful career at NASA and the Agricultural Research Service of the US Department of Agriculture.

### Geosphere-Biosphere

[Professor Sybil Seitzinger](#), Rutgers University, has been appointed Executive Director of the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (IGBP). She will take up the appointment on 1 September.

The fourth IGBP Congress [Sustainable Livelihoods in a Changing Earth System](#) will be held in Cape Town, South Africa, 5–9 May. The congress will include discussions on improving IGBP relevance beyond the research community, identifying pathways to sustainable solutions—particularly where IGBP can contribute—and developing ways for IGBP to apply Earth system science.

### Reviews of Climate Research and Geosphere-Biosphere Programmes

The Review Panels of the World Climate Research Programme (WCRP) and the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (IGBP) held their first meetings in January.

Both Review Panels are inviting input around the central question: what do scientists, sponsors and end-users get out of participating in and supporting the programme that they would not have gained if it did not exist? With the central question in mind, the Review Panels would also like to know: is the programme doing fine? Is the programme effective? If it needs to change, then how?

The WCRP Review is being conducted by ICSU in collaboration with the programme's two other

sponsors—WMO and UNESCO-IOC—and the International Group of Funding Agencies for Global Change Research (IGFA). The IGBP Review is being conducted by ICSU in collaboration with IGFA.

Input and comments for either of the reviews should be sent to the email addresses below by **15 May 2008**.

- WCRP Review: [wcrp.review@icsu.org](mailto:wcrp.review@icsu.org)
- IGBP Review: [igbp.review@icsu.org](mailto:igbp.review@icsu.org)

[Further information](#) on the reviews, including the Terms of Reference, is available.

## Resilience

The [Resilience2008](#) conference—focusing on resilience, adaptation and transformation in turbulent times—took place in Stockholm, Sweden, 14–17 April. The conference brought together scientists, as well as representatives from government and business to discuss the challenges facing societal development and together propose ways forward. Resilience2008 was organized by the Resilience Alliance, in collaboration with the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences and ICSU.

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## Science for Policy

### World Climate Conference

In 2007, the Congress of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) agreed to organize the third [World Climate Conference](#) (WCC-3), to be held in Geneva in August 2009. The overarching theme will be climate prediction for decision making: focusing on seasonal to inter-annual timescales, taking into account multi-decadal prediction. Following an invitation by WMO, the ICSU Executive Board agreed that ICSU will co-sponsor this event. The first meeting of the WCC-3 International Organizing Committee took place in Geneva in February, with ICSU participation. The Organizing Committee set up three Sub-Committees: High-Level Segment; Programme; and Linkages and Interactions with other relevant International Organizations. ICSU agreed to contribute to the work of the latter two Sub-Committees.

### Biosecurity

Several of ICSU's life sciences Unions, in cooperation with the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, co-organised the second International Forum on Biosecurity which was held in Budapest, Hungary, 30 March–2 April. The [first Forum](#) was co-sponsored by ICSU and held at Lake Como in Italy in 2005, where it was agreed that the Scientific Unions have a central role to play in promoting biosafety across the international scientific community. Raising awareness, education and guidelines/codes of practice are all considered to be necessary.

### Renewable Energies

The third meeting of the [International Science Panel on Renewable Energies](#) (ISPRES) was hosted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Paris in January. The Panel is now finalising its first analyses of the status of global research on photovoltaics, wind and biomass energy. Additional analyses of solar-thermal, geothermal and hydro/wave research are being planned.

## Universality of Science

### Regional Office for Africa

The ICSU Regional Committee for Africa met in Maputo, Mozambique, in January. The Committee discussed preparations for the upcoming General Assembly and inspected the venue with the local organizers, the Scientific Research Association of Mozambique (AICIMO).

In February, the Director of the Regional Office attended the official launch of the [International Year of Planet Earth 2007–2009](#) (IYPE) at UNESCO in Paris. The aim of the IYPE is to use Earth science to help make the world a healthier, wealthier and safer place to live. IYPE is a joint initiative of the International Union of Geological Sciences and UNESCO, and is strongly supported by other ICSU geo-Unions.

The Director also gave a presentation on the activities of the Regional Office at the [1st African Digital Management and Curation Conference and Workshop](#) in Pretoria, South Africa, in February. Conference discussions centred on accessing and archiving scientific data and the management framework required in light of technological changes.

### Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

The year began with the Director of the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific participating in an international workshop 'ASEAN Disaster Management: Enhancing Multilateral Approaches Across the Spectrum of Emergency Response'. The workshop was organized by The Scholar Ship Research Institute and the Asia Research Institute of the National University of Singapore. Participants examined the conditions necessary for South-East Asian states and multilateral organizations, like ASEAN, to enhance multilateral coordination in responding to and ameliorating the effects of natural and/or human-induced disasters.

The Regional Office co-organized a round-table to discuss the science-policy interface required to promote an ecosystem perspective in development planning and monitoring. Natural and social scientists, policy makers and economists were involved in the discussions, which focused on the need to preserve ecosystem services for human well-being. The other organizers of the round-table were the Institute of Advanced Studies, United Nations University, Institute for Environment and Development, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and the Academy of Sciences Malaysia.

The Director was invited to make a presentation at the thirteenth meeting of the Joint Inter-Governmental Meeting and Science Planning Group of the Asia Pacific Network for Global Change Research (APN) in Kobe, Japan. The presentation included the current and future activities of the Regional Office, its interests in science-policy linkages and possible ways of enhancing collaboration. This proved to be a prime opportunity for ICSU to contribute towards strengthening future funding priorities in science-policy linkages by the APN.

### Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean

The fourth meeting of the Regional Committee for Latin America and Caribbean was hosted by the Chilean Academy of Sciences in March. The Committee discussed the progress of the four Scientific Planning Groups (SPG) which are developing the four Science Plans based on the priority areas—hazards and disasters, sustainable energy, biodiversity and mathematics

education.

The SPG for Sustainable Energy held their first meeting in January, Mathematics Education and Biodiversity have both outlined preliminary frameworks for their Science Plans, while Natural Disasters have proposed key scientific aspects that need to be addressed in establishing an effective Science Plan for prevention and mitigation. The members of the SPG for Natural Disasters also participated in the March meeting of the UNESCO Regional Consultation on Natural Disasters and Sustainable Development.

## Freedom and Responsibility

The [Committee on Freedom and Responsibility in the conduct of Science](#) has finalized a draft of its new booklet *Freedom, Responsibility and the Universality of Science*, which was recently circulated to Members for consideration. It is the first attempt by the Committee to lay out a globally-applicable framework for the responsibilities of scientists and, as such, the feedback from Members is crucial. The draft booklet is available under 'Documentation for Members' in the [Member Zone](#) of the ICSU website.

## Data and Information

The ad hoc [Strategic Committee on Information and Data](#) held its third and final meeting at the end of February. A draft report and recommendations concerning the re-structuring of ICSU's data infrastructures has been circulated to all Members for consideration.

## Publication Ethics

Following discussions at the World Conference on Research Integrity in 2007, the ICSU Executive Board decided to establish a [Virtual Working Group on Publication Ethics](#). After consultation with the ICSU Unions, this group was set up rapidly in order to interact with an initiative from the International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers. The aim is to produce a universal set of ethical guidelines covering issues, such as authorship, peer-review, the role of editors and conflicts of interest.

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# ICSU Governance and Policies

## Officers Meeting

The [decisions](#) from the Officers meeting in January are now available in the resource centre of the ICSU website.

## 29th General Assembly — Maputo, Mozambique

Online registration and an updated agenda for the General Assembly (GA) are now available in the [Member Zone](#) of the ICSU website.

The Local Organizing Committee (LOC) in Mozambique is organizing events to be held in association with the GA. These include: a 'Science in Africa' symposium, to be held in Maputo on 20 October; and a local scientific programme which will take place in various provinces of Mozambique, 13–17 October. The scientific programme, which includes seminars and site visits, is based on the four priority areas of the Regional Office for Africa and two national priorities—marine sciences and fisheries, and education. There will also be a poster exhibition and a number of workshops in Maputo for which organizations and individuals are invited to

send proposals to the LOC. A scientific exhibition, 'Science for Development', will also provide space for GA participants and other interested organizations to display material relating to their scientific activities during the week of the GA.

For more information on these events, please contact the Executive Director of the LOC and President of the Scientific Research Association of Mozambique (AICIMO), Patricio Sande, at [pasande@tdm.co.mz](mailto:pasande@tdm.co.mz) or [patricio.sande@gmail.com](mailto:patricio.sande@gmail.com).

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## ICSU Secretariat

### Building inauguration

Following extensive renovations, the new ICSU office building will be inaugurated on 22 May with a function attended by the French Minister for Higher Education and Research, Mme Valérie Pécresse.

[Contact : Jacinta Legg](#)

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