



## ICSU Insight

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#### **29th ICSU General Assembly**

More than 270 participants gathered in Maputo, Mozambique, 21–24 October, for the 29th ICSU General Assembly (GA) – the first time an ICSU GA has been held in sub-Saharan Africa. Hosted by the Scientific Research Association of Mozambique (AICIMO) under the auspices of the Government of Mozambique and in cooperation with the ICSU Regional Office for Africa, the event was a great success, with delegates enjoying the wonderful hospitality of the local hosts.

During the Opening Ceremony, H.E. Armando Emilio Guebuza, the President of Mozambique, outlined some of the challenges facing his country due to global climate change, while Goverdhan Mehta, ICSU President (2005–2008), reflected on ICSU's achievements in implementing its first ever Strategic Plan (2006–2011).

The 29th GA also saw all three ICSU Regional Offices participating for the first time since their establishment.

[More on the GA](#), including photographs and links to press coverage, is available on the ICSU website. Decisions will be available in January.

### Highlights from the General Assembly

#### New Hazards Research Programme

A major new research programme, Integrated Research on Disaster Risk – the challenge of natural and human-induced environmental hazards (IRDR) will be established. The programme will be of 10 years' duration and co-sponsored by the International Social Science Council

(ISSC).

[Press release](#)

[Science Plan for IRDR](#)

## New Ecosystem Change Research Programme

ICSU Members have approved a new 10-year programme, Ecosystem Change and Human Well-being (ECHW), to be sponsored jointly with UNESCO and the United Nations University (UNU).

[Press release](#)

## Freedom and Responsibility

The Assembly endorsed the booklet *Freedom, Responsibility and Universality of Science*, and the role of ICSU Members in assisting the Committee on Freedom and Responsibility in the Conduct of Science (CFRS) to carry out its work.

[Press release](#)

[Booklet](#)

## New World Data System

Based on the recommendations in a report from the *Ad hoc* Strategic Committee on Information and Data (SCID), an ICSU World Data System (WDS) will be established as an Interdisciplinary Body. It will replace the World Data Centres (WDC) and the Federation of Astronomical and Geophysical Data Analysis Services (FAGS).

[Press release](#)

[Report from SCID](#)

## Problems of the Environment

After considering the report from the review of the Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment (SCOPE), Members agreed that SCOPE will cease to be an ICSU Interdisciplinary Body following a transition period of no more than two years.

[Report from the SCOPE review](#)

## Second Strategic Plan

The Assembly requested the Executive Board develop, in consultation with Members, a second Strategic Plan (2012–2017) for approval at the 30th General Assembly.

[Briefing document](#)

## Social Sciences

ICSU Members reaffirmed the need for increased involvement of social scientists in the implementation of the ICSU Strategic Plan. Members agreed that ICSU must work with the International Social Science Council (ISSC) as a key partner and requested National Members assist in identifying social scientists to help implement ICSU's Strategic Plan.

[Press release](#)

[Report](#)

## Dues Structure

Based on recommendations from the Working Group to Review Dues Structures and decisions from the Executive Board, Members agreed to adopt a new dues structure to take effect as of 2012.

[Report from the Working Group](#) (Member Zone)

## New Leaders for ICSU

Yuan Tseh Lee (China: Taipei) has been elected to take over as ICSU President in 2011. Catherine Bréchnignac (France) assumed the Presidency (2008–2011) from Goverdhan Mehta (India) at the conclusion of the Assembly.

[Press release](#)

## New Executive Board

A new Executive Board has been elected, with Kari Raivio (Finland) and Reiko Kuroda (Japan) serving as Vice-Presidents for the next three years. Maurice Tchunte (Cameroon) was elected

Secretary-General and Hans Rudolf Ott (Switzerland) will serve as Treasurer.

[Full Membership of the new Executive Board](#)

## Resolutions

The General Assembly adopted three resolutions.

- The Executive Board has been mandated to explore how ICSU Members and Interdisciplinary Bodies can work with the scientific community in Mozambique in support of the Government of Mozambique as it implements its science and technology strategy.
- ICSU will take a leadership role in developing basic principles for forward planning at all stages of research projects and programmes, for data identification, sharing, availability and long-term preservation.
- The international scientific community must make efforts to improve internet capabilities in scientific, technical and educational institutions in Africa and around the world.

Full text of the resolutions will be available in the GA decisions.

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## Planning and Coordinating Research

### Hazards and Disasters

Preparations are currently under way for the establishment of the Scientific Committee for the [Integrated Research on Disaster Risk](#) (IRDR) programme. Invitations to host the International Project Office for IRDR have been sent to ICSU National Members.

The ICSU Executive Director delivered an address at the Opening Session of the [World Landslide Forum](#) in Tokyo in November, briefing participants on the new IRDR programme. He also served as member of a High-Level Panel devoted to the subject 'Landslides in Global Change – how to mitigate risk?'

### International Polar Year

A European ministerial-level meeting on the need to extend the legacy of observations from the International Polar Year (IPY) was held in Monaco in October. Discussions also included the European Union commitment to Arctic observations and the strong support for an initiative by the Arctic Council called Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks (SAON). The ICSU Executive Board has decided that ICSU should endorse SAON.

The seventh International Polar Day was held on 4 December and focused on research '[Above the polar regions](#)', including polar meteorology, atmospheric sciences, astronomy, and polar observations from space. The event also coincided with the start of the [International Year of Astronomy 2009](#) (IYA). The final polar day, 'Oceans and marine life', will be held on 19 March. More information on Polar Days is available on the [IPY website](#).

Two years on from the official launch, plans are underway for an IPY celebration at the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in Geneva, Switzerland, on 25 February. The event will include the launch of the 'State of Polar Research' report from the IPY Joint Committee, a press conference and reception.

## Global Change Programmes

### Earth System Science Partnership

The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and the [Earth System Science Partnership](#) (ESSP) have announced a new Challenge Programme on [Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security](#). Thomas Rosswall, the outgoing Executive Director of ICSU, has been appointed Chair of the new programme.

### Biodiversity

Implementation of the Group on Earth Observations Biodiversity Observation

Network (GEO BON), an initiative co-led by [DIVERSITAS](#), was approved at the GEO-V Plenary.

A short policy brief on GEO BON, '[Toward a Global Biodiversity Observing System](#)', was published in *Science* in August.

The second DIVERSITAS Open Science Conference, [Biodiversity and Society: Understanding Connections, Adapting to Change](#), will take place in Cape Town, South Africa, 13–16 October 2009.

### Geosphere-Biosphere

A draft of the [ICSU-IGFA review of the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme](#) (IGBP) has been distributed to Members of ICSU and the International Group of Funding Agencies for Global Change (IGFA) for comment. The Review Panel will consider the comments before delivering the final report to ICSU's Committee for Scientific Planning and Review at its meeting in February.

### Human Dimensions

At its meeting in October, the Scientific Committee of the [International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change](#) (IHDP) launched the Earth System Governance Project as a new core project and initiated a Pilot Science Project on Integrated Risk Governance. The IHDP sponsors have re-appointed Oran Young for a second three-year term (2009–2011) as Chair of the Scientific Committee.

### Climate

A draft of the [ICSU-IGFA review of the World Climate Research Programme](#) (WCRP) has been distributed to Members of ICSU, WMO, IGFA and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) for comment. The Review Panel will consider the comments before delivering the final report to ICSU's Committee for Scientific Planning and Review at its meeting in February.

## Ecosystem Change and Human Well-being

The ICSU-UNESCO-UNU report proposing the Ecosystem Change and Human Well-Being programme will be published in January. The sponsors will invite members of a Scientific Committee for the programme in early 2009 and ICSU National Members have been invited to offer to host, and financially support, an International Programme Office.

A scientific paper based on the programme will be published shortly (Carpenter, S. R. *et al* 'Science for Managing Ecosystem Services: Beyond the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment', *PNAS*, in press). The programme will, together with DIVERSITAS, provide much of the new scientific results that will provide the science base for the proposed Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES; [see below](#)).

## Global Observations

The Steering Committee for the [Global Climate Observing System](#) (GCOS) will prepare an updated strategic plan for GCOS, stressing the need for continuing close links with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The Committee has also endorsed GCOS' role as the climate component of the Global Earth Observing System of Systems (GEOSS).

At the [GEO-V Plenary Session](#) the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) approved the 2009–2011 Work Plan for continued development of GEOSS, and reached agreement on the GEO Data Sharing Principles and the respective Implementation Guidelines (which were prepared by the ICSU [Committee on Data for Science and Technology](#); CODATA). GEO has requested CODATA to continue to act as the principal body of expert advice on data policy.

## Consultation on Future Strategic Priorities

The consultation process for the development of the second ICSU Strategic Plan 2012–2017 has begun with an initial request for input from ICSU Members, Associates and Interdisciplinary Bodies. This is based on a [briefing paper](#) that was presented to the General Assembly in October.

## International Group of Funding Agencies for Global Change Research

The annual meeting of the [International Group of Funding Agencies for Global Change Research](#) (IGFA) met in Mexico City in October. The Executive Director was invited to make a presentation of the challenges for the funding communities speaking on behalf of the four global change research programmes and the Earth System Science Partnership. This served as a background for a detailed discussion of the mission and *modus operandi* of IGFA.

## European Science Foundation Looks Forward

The Executive Director participated in an informal consultation at the European Science Foundation (ESF) in early November. This was a pre-scoping meeting for an ESF Forward Look on 'Global Environmental Change in the Anthropocene' (tentative title) with a focus on adaptation and mitigation. ESF published its first Forward Look report '[Global Problems, Global Science – Europe's Contribution to Global Change Research](#)' in 2003.

## Copenhagen Climate Conference

The University of Copenhagen will host a scientific congress [Climate Change: Global Risks, Challenges and Decisions](#), 10–12 March, with the aim of providing a synthesis of the existing and emerging scientific knowledge that is needed to make decisions on mitigation and adaptation strategies in response to climate change. The science congress is a lead-up to the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 15), which will be held in Copenhagen, 30 November–11 December 2009.

## International Year of Astronomy 2009

The International Year of Astronomy 2009 (IYA2009) is a global effort initiated by the International Astronomical Union and UNESCO – and endorsed by ICSU. Under the theme 'The Universe, Yours to Discover', the aim is to stimulate worldwide interest, especially among young people, in astronomy and science. More information is available on the [IYA2009 website](#).

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## Science for Policy

### Sustainable Development

On behalf of the Scientific and Technological Community (Major Group), ICSU submitted a [report](#) to the UN for the [17th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development](#) (CSD) to be held in New York, 4–15 May. The report recommends priorities for action in agriculture, land, rural development, drought and desertification – the focus of the current CSD cycle.

### Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) hosted an intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder [consultation](#) in Malaysia to discuss the establishment of an [Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services](#) (IPBES) as a follow-up to the [Millennium Ecosystem Assessment](#) (MA) and the consultative process towards an [International Mechanism of Scientific Expertise on Biodiversity](#) (IMoSEB).

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## Universality of Science

### Regional Office for Africa

In August, the [Regional Office for Africa](#), in collaboration with the South African National Research Foundation (NRF), organized a workshop of experts on 'Health and Human Well-being in sub-Saharan Africa' to start preparing project proposals in line with the [Science Plan](#) for this priority area. The Science Plan on [Global Environmental Change \(including Climate Change and Adaptation\) in sub-Saharan Africa](#) has been published and is available online.

The Regional Office and the NRF, in collaboration with the government of Mozambique, successfully organized a series of events prior to the ICSU General Assembly, including

workshops in the various provinces of Mozambique, a 'Science in Africa Symposium', and a 'Dialogue on Science, Technology and Innovation in Africa'. Discussion topics during the dialogue session centred on: the role of STI in the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals; STI partnerships between Africa and Europe, and the rest of the world; involving the African Diaspora in STI activities in Africa; and funding of science research in Africa.

The book, *Science, Technology, and Innovation for Socio-economic Development: Success Stories from Africa*, which was launched during the ICSU General Assembly, will be available in early 2009.

## Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

The [Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific](#) continues to develop Science Plans based on the priorities for the region. The Science Plans on Hazards and Disasters, [Earthquakes, Floods and Landslides](#) and [Special Vulnerability of Islands](#) are available online. The Science Planning Group on Ecosystem Change is preparing the content of a draft plan, while the Science Planning Group on Sustainable Energy has compiled a first draft, with a final draft expected in March 2009.

The 99th meeting of the ICSU Executive Board appointed Members of the [Regional Committee for Asia and the Pacific](#). ICSU would like to thank Anupam Varma for his work as the first Chair of the Regional Committee.

At its sixth meeting, the newly appointed Regional Committee agreed on a road-map to fully develop the potential of the Regional Office in the next three years. The Committee also discussed how the regional programme for hazards and disasters could dovetail with the global programme, Integrated Research on Disaster Risk (IRDR), which is being established by ICSU. A half-day forum on sustainable energy in Asia and the Pacific, with a special focus on China (the host country), was held in conjunction with the meeting.

## Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean

Following the ICSU General Assembly, the Director of the [Regional Office for Latin America and Caribbean](#) attended 'Science, Technology, Engineering, and Innovation as Tools for Prosperity', the Second Inter-American Meeting of Ministers and High Authorities of Science and Technology, in Mexico City. The Director provided information on the regional and international agenda in science and technology, conveying ICSU's principles and programmes, and emphasized activities being engaged by the Regional Office. The large number of Ministers and High Authorities in attendance illustrated the importance attributed to science and technology by countries of the region.

The 99th meeting of the ICSU Executive Board appointed Members of the [Regional Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean](#).

## Freedom and Responsibility

The booklet [Freedom, Responsibility and Universality of Science](#), published by the Committee on Freedom and Responsibility in the conduct of Science (CFRS), is available in hard copy and online. If you would like printed copies for distribution, please contact Jacinta at the ICSU Secretariat ([jacinta.legg@icsu.org](mailto:jacinta.legg@icsu.org)).

## Research Integrity

ICSU is working with the European Science Foundation, the US Office of Research Integrity, and several other science organizations to coordinate follow-up to the [first World Conference on Research Integrity](#) that took place in Lisbon in September 2007. Planning is underway for a second conference to be held in Asia in 2010. Scientific publishing is once again a main topic of discussion at the planning meetings – an area in which CFRS has recently released two [statements](#) of concern.

## Data and Information

ICSU Members and Interdisciplinary Bodies have been invited to submit nominations for the two new data committees that were recommended in the [report](#) from the Strategic Committee on Information and Data (SCID): the Scientific Committee for the ICSU World Data System and

the Strategic Coordinating Committee for Information and Data. Nominations will be considered by the Committee for Scientific Planning and Review in February 2009.

An interim committee has been formed to ensure the smooth transition of the World Data Centres (WDC) and the Federation of Astronomical and Geophysical Data Analysis Services (FAGS) into the new ICSU World Data System. The committee, co-chaired by Bernard Minster and Nicole Capitaine who chaired the WDC Panel and FAGS Council respectively, will formulate advice for the new Scientific Committee for the World Data System by mid-2009

The 21st International CODATA Conference [Scientific Information for Society – From Today to the Future](#) was held in October in Kyiv, Ukraine and included a special round table discussion on the report from SCID. It also included sessions on the World Data Centres and management of data from the International Polar Year.

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## ICSU Governance and Policies

### Scientific Planning and Review

[Decisions](#) from the 16th Meeting of the Committee for Scientific Planning and Review (CSPR) will be available in January.

### 98th and 99th Meetings of the Executive Board

[Decisions](#) from the 98th and 99th Meetings of the Executive Board are available online.

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## ICSU National and Union Members

### ICSU Welcomes New Members

ICSU is pleased to welcome [new Members](#) to the ICSU family – the Dominican Republic, Lao PDR and the International Union of Immunological Societies. The Society for Social Studies of Science has also joined ICSU as a Scientific Associate. ICSU's Membership now comprises 116 National Members (representing 136 countries) and 30 International Scientific Unions.

### Visits to National Members

During a recent visit to Tokyo, the Executive Director met with Ichiro Kanazawa, the President of the Science Council of Japan (SCJ); Norisha Doi, Vice-President of SCJ; Hiroyuki Yoshikawa, former President of ICSU; Kiyoshi Kurokawa, a former member of CSPR; and Koza Uto from the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology (AIST).

The Deputy Executive Director gave a presentation to UK representatives of ICSU Unions and Interdisciplinary Bodies during a visit to the Royal Society in September. This was a valuable opportunity to interact with several national scientific societies, which play a crucial role in organizing and representing scientific interests at the national level but are largely unaware of ICSU's activities at the global level.

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## Partners

### UNESCO Framework Agreement

ICSU has signed a new six-year Framework Agreement with UNESCO for 2008–2013. Under this agreement, ICSU agrees to work in partnership with UNESCO to promote international cooperation in science, plan and coordinate international and interdisciplinary research, assist in integrating science into international policy making, and promote the Principle of the Universality of Science.

## International Social Science Council – General Assembly

The [27th General Assembly](#) of the International Social Science Council (ISSC) passed a resolution in support of closer collaboration with ICSU and enthusiastically agreed to cosponsor the new ICSU programme, Integrated Research on Disaster Risk (IRDR). Gudmund Hernes was re-elected as President and will serve until 2010.

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## ICSU Secretariat

### Thank you and Best Wishes for 2009

As 2008 draws to a close, the ICSU Secretariat would like to thank the many organizations and individuals who have contributed to 'strengthening international science for the benefit of society' during the year. A special thank you is extended to all those who helped make the 29th General Assembly a success, in particular AICIMO (the ICSU National Member in Mozambique), the Local Organizing Committee, and the Regional Office for Africa.

Best wishes for 2009 and we look forward to working with you all again.

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Strengthening international science for the benefit of society