



FUTURE EARTH: Meeting the challenges of global sustainability for human development in Sub Saharan Africa

Panel Discussion: November 1, 2012, 6pm-8pm, University of Cape Town

How can science and technology provide solutions to meet emerging challenges on global sustainability in Sub Saharan Africa? Fast economic growth and urbanization across the continent are putting increasing pressure on the environment. Future Earth, a new, interdisciplinary research programme slated to start operating in 2013, seeks to provide user-oriented knowledge to meet challenges arising from Earth system changes in an epoch dominated by human activity.

WHAT

A special panel discussion on “Global Sustainability in Sub Saharan Africa: Future Earth and the role of science” will provide a unique opportunity to explore the fast growing field of global environmental change research in Africa.

Future Earth places a strong emphasis on the value of co-designing research with the end-users of that research, namely society, government and business. A distinguished panel of high-level experts will debate with the audience how Future Earth can co-produce scientific knowledge for a continent which has six of the world’s ten fastest growing economies and where urbanization is forecast to rise from the current 40% to 60% in 2050.

About Future Earth

Launched at the Science and Technology forum in Rio+20, Future Earth is being established by a broad Science and Technology Alliance for Global Sustainability, including the International Council for Science (ICSU), the International Social Science Council (ISSC), the Belmont Forum of global change research funding agencies, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations University (UNU) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) as observer.

Future Earth is a 10-year international programme on Earth system research for global sustainability. The goal of Future Earth is to provide the knowledge required for societies in the world to face risks posed by global environmental change and to seize opportunities in a transition to global sustainability.

While the scope of Future Earth is global, a number of issues require region-specific approaches and alliances to provide robust observation and forecast of regional environmental changes, assess potential impacts and vulnerabilities, explore mitigation and adaptation pathways, etc. Regions, as early witnesses of environmental changes, have therefore a critical contribution to make in assessing global environmental change and building a global picture for transitioning towards sustainability. Regions have also a fundamental role to play in implementing sustainability research and facilitate its application, through identifying needs and priorities from researchers and practitioners, including at the national level, stimulating cooperation and partnerships, and promoting institutional coherence.

As a first step to engage with the regions in developing and delivering Future Earth, a set of regional workshops sponsored by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) will be organised.

The first 3-day workshop will be held in Cape Town, South Africa, to discuss, challenge, regionalize and specify the initial design options on the global research framework for Future Earth. Discussions will focus on the research priorities particularly relevant for Africa that Future Earth should address, and the governance and institutional arrangements necessary to successfully deliver Future Earth in the region. The workshop will gather scientists working on global and regional environmental change across disciplines, development actors, educators and capacity builders, funders and individuals working at the boundary between science and policy. For more information about Future Earth, please visit <http://www.icsu.org/future-earth/>.

A panel discussion on “Global Sustainability in Sub Saharan Africa: Future Earth and the role of science” at the University of Cape Town will be organised as part of the above mentioned workshop. The panel discussion aims to engage young scientists as well as the media to discuss Earth System research needs and opportunities for achieving sustainable development in Africa. The event will be attended by distinguished guests and prominent scientists.

WHO

The panelists include:

Derek Hanekom, South African Minister of Science and Technology

Max Price, Vice-Chancellor, University of Cape Town

Mark New, Moderator, Pro-VC and Director, African Climate and Development Initiative, University of Cape Town

Martin Visbeck, Professor, GEOMAR | Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel, Germany, Future Earth transition team member

Tanya Abrahamse, Chief Executive Officer, South African National Biodiversity Research Institute (SANBI), Future Earth transition team member

Kobie Brand, Regional Director, ICLEI Africa - Local Governments for Sustainability

Mark Swilling, Programme Coordinator, Sustainable Development Planning and Management in the School of Public Leadership, University of Stellenbosch, Academic Director of the Sustainability Institute

Harald Winkler, Professor at the Energy Research Centre, University of Cape Town

Edgar Pieterse, Director of the African Centre for Cities in the Faculty of Engineering & the Built Environment, University of Cape Town

Camaren Peter, Sustainability Research Consultant and Senior Lecturer, School of Public Leadership, University of Stellenbosch

The event is jointly organised by the University of Cape Town, the International Council for Science (ICSU), and the International Social Science Council (ISSC) with financial support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

WHERE

University of Cape Town, John Day Zoology Building, Lecture Theatre 1 (see map attached)

Address:

University Ave
UCT Upper Campus
Woolsack Drive
Rondebosch

Registration

Space is limited, please RSVP to Wadzi Madangombe (thedzawanai@gmail.com) copying Katsia Paulavets (katsia.paulavets@icsu.org) by Oct 30.

About ICSU

Founded in 1931, ICSU is a non-governmental organization with a global membership of national scientific bodies (121 Members, representing 141 countries) and International Scientific Unions (30 Members). The Council is frequently called upon to speak on behalf of the global scientific community and to act as an advisor in matters ranging from the environment to conduct in science. ICSU's activities focus on three areas: planning and coordinating research; science for policy; and strengthening the Universality of Science.