



Stockholm 19 November 2012

Note from the Swedish National Committee for Global Environment Change on the role of national committees in the Future Earth Initiative.

The organisation and anticipated impacts of the Swedish National Committee for Global Environmental Change.

The Swedish National Committee for Global Environment Environmental Change (Swedish NC) is under the auspices of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences (KVA), and was established during 2012. It functions as the NC for all the current ICSU Global Environmental Change (GEC) programmes, although its scope is not limited to that. The Swedish NC comprises the members of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences (KVA) Environment Committee and the board of the Swedish Secretariat for Environmental Earth System Sciences (SSEESS). The board of SSEESS consists of representatives from four different research councils and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, as well as scientists appointed by KVA.

The NC has administrative and financial support from SSEESS. This supportive role falls well within the goals of SSEESS, as the organisation was established to enhance the integration of Swedish GEC research with international programs, and to function as a science-based and independent source of information for Swedish policy and decision makers. SSEESS is also responsible for the Swedish member fees to IHDP and Diversitas, and represents the NC in many international fora.

As the NC was recently established no conclusions can be made on its efficiency and success. Interestingly, however, the NC brings together a broad scientific representation, representatives from research councils and the politics, and the institutional capacity of SSEESS. The NC therefore has the potential to handle disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary issues related to GEC Science and to engage a variety of stakeholders. The NC also has the capacity to maintain a deeper interaction with relevant international programs, including Future Earth. This model should in theory be possible to apply in most countries, depending on available support and institutional capacity.

Perspectives on how national committees can contribute to Future Earth.

There is a growing demand on the foci, strategies, and the organisational structure of GEC research, and an increasing emphasis on international collaboration. At the same time, the success of the current and upcoming international research programs largely depends on the strength and structure of contributing national research and, not the least, its links to the international GEC research. In turn, the quality, collaborative framework, coordination of funding, policy relevance, and trans-disciplinary character of national research is enhanced by participation in international research initiatives. NCs can facilitate this cross fertilisation.



Internationally generated scientific data often provide an important knowledge base for national decision makers in their work in both national and international fora. Also, the end users of this knowledge and resulting policies are often operating at national and municipal levels, in terms of both policy making and implementation, and local conditions and needs vary greatly. National “anchors” or two-ways translators in the form of NCs would therefore be as relevant for the Future Earth Initiative as for the current ICSU GEC programs.

The NCs can also seek to stimulate funding agencies in their respective countries to support research and projects that are relevant or directly linked to Future Earth. Moreover, NCs can play a role at the international level for Future Earth, such as in the Swedish case where SSEESS is representing Sweden in the International Group of Funding Agencies (IGFA). SSEESS, which as mentioned is also representing and influenced by the Swedish NC, is actively participating in IGFA’s efforts to establish and international funding strategy for Future Earth.

Collaboration between national committees and Future Earth

To fill their purpose, the NCs would need to accurately and with a strong dedication manage the opportunities offered by Future Earth for research, decision support, and stakeholder engagement in their respective countries and international arenas. At the same time, the productivity and efficiency of a NC does, naturally, not only depend on its own structure, dedication, and capacity. The Future Earth Initiative would need to clearly specify its expectations from the committees on a regular basis, especially in conjunction with particular events or developments within the program, such as when research priority settings are to be made or when certain capacities are requested.

Also, to establish and maintain a proper national representation and support Future Earth will need to have an efficient communication strategy that, while maintaining a uniform overall approach, can be used, reproduced and adapted according to specific needs in the different countries and regions. For example, through SSEESS the Swedish NC is already disseminating information about the formation and objectives of Future Earth among Swedish researchers, funding agencies and decision makers, and the work requires a central communication strategy to relate to. The benefits for a country and its participating institutions to maintain an active and engaged NC also need to be clear and regularly emphasised.

On behalf of the Swedish National Committee for Global Environmental Change:

Dan Wilhelmsson
Deputy Director
Swedish Secretariat for Environmental Earth System Sciences
Dan.wilhelmsson@sseess.kva.se