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## PRESS RELEASE

### Research solutions for sustainability in a rapidly changing world

**A newly established international research initiative will respond to the most compelling challenges facing our societies in this era of global environmental change**

**Rome, Italy** – The International Council for Science (ICSU), within a global alliance of partners, has established a major 10-year initiative which aims to effectively deliver solution-oriented research on global environmental change for sustainability. This new international collaboration effort, the **Earth System Sustainability Initiative**, will provide global coordination for science to respond to the most pressing societal and environmental challenges.

The growing sense of urgency is emphasized by Prof. Johan Rockström, Executive Director of the Stockholm Environment Institute and Stockholm Resilience Centre, and co-Chair of the team that is overseeing design and early implementation of the initiative: “The current pace and magnitude of human-induced global change is unprecedented, and is manifest in increasingly dangerous threats to societies and well-being. Climate change and biodiversity loss are only two examples of processes occurring at unsustainable rates.” Rockström adds: “Effective responses to all these threats to world development require a new way of doing research.”

With its integrated approach based on the active involvement of a broad range of stakeholders, the initiative will provide support for actions towards sustainability. Its launch will be next June, at the United Nations “Rio+20” conference, when policy- and decision-makers from across the world will explore new pathways to sustainable development.

“The research strategy of this initiative will link global environmental change and fundamental human development questions”, explains Prof. Diana Liverman, the other team co-Chair and co-Director of the Institute of the Environment at the University of Arizona. “Global environmental change is substantively affecting everybody’s life, our ability to access food, water, energy, our vulnerability to hazardous events, and ultimately our ability to eradicate poverty. Only by actively engaging natural sciences, social sciences and humanities, can we provide a full understanding of global change, of its impacts on people, and of people’s responses to it.”

This interdisciplinary initiative arises from the ICSU-led Earth System Visioning process, a three-year consultation with researchers and research users that concluded last February. The consultation identified a set of five overarching Grand Challenges on Earth system research for global sustainability. Growing collaboration with other international organizations with similar processes and mandates has strengthened the basis of the initiative. It is now jointly managed by ICSU, the International Social Science Council (ISSC), the Belmont Forum of funding agencies, UNEP, UNESCO and UNU.

“For the first time on a global scale we can talk about effectively co-designed research on global environmental change, with researchers, donors and users working hand-in-hand to define goals and priorities upfront”, says Prof. Yuan T Lee, winner of the 1986 Nobel Prize in Chemistry and incoming ICSU President. Lee emphasizes that “this new broad partnership will ensure a step-change in international research coordination” and adds that “ICSU and its Members, representing the global scientific community, are fully committed and ready to promote this new effort that will further strengthen international science for the benefit of society.”

For more information on the Earth System Sustainability Initiative, see: <http://www.icsu.org/what-we-do/projects-activities/earth-system-sustainability-initiative>.

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#### About ICSU

Founded in 1931, ICSU is a non-governmental organization with a global membership of national scientific bodies (120 Members, representing 140 countries) and International Scientific Unions (30 Members). The Council’s activities focus on three areas: planning and coordinating research; science for policy; and strengthening the Universality of Science. ICSU 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. [www.icsu.org](http://www.icsu.org)