



Governance framework and institutional mechanisms for Future Earth¹

Future Earth will engage with and deliver essential knowledge to a wide variety of stakeholders across science, policy, business/industry and civil society communities to address global environmental change issues. These issues are many and strongly linked to human development challenges, and the solutions needed are multidimensional, cutting across scales, disciplines, sectors, in a system of interdependencies and interlinkages. Future Earth will support transformation towards global sustainability.



Figure 1: Main stakeholder groups relevant for Future Earth, globally and regionally

The governance framework and institutional arrangements of Future Earth should create the conditions to deliver high-quality interdisciplinary and solution-oriented research in strong partnership with the users of the research. Achieving this requires assembly of a multi-scale, robust and flexible governance structure to support fundamental research on the Earth system, linking natural and social sciences, economics and technology; involving stakeholders in the definition of research priorities and production of “actionable” research; and building capacity across countries and regions to produce and apply this research.

Elements of the overall structure are presented in Figure 2 and are the basis for further elaboration, especially regarding the regional arrangements required for Future Earth to add value to existing initiatives and support new ideas and partnerships.

¹ This document is a draft for consultation. It takes into account the most recent discussions of the Future Earth Transition Team, and is agreed by its co-Chairs.

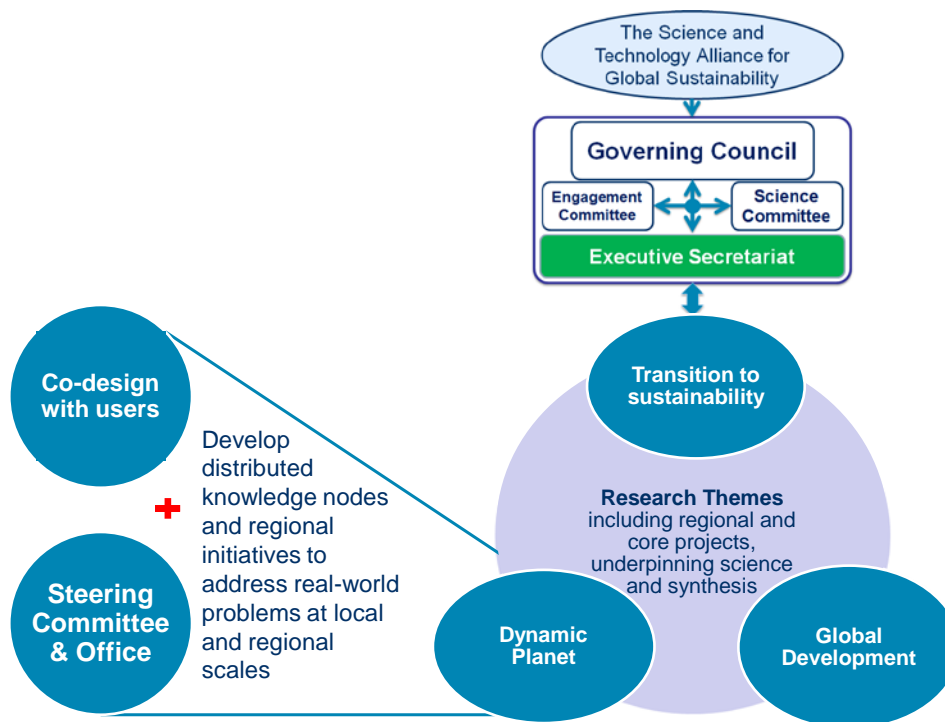


Figure 2: Schematics of the proposed governance structure for Future Earth

The key components of the proposed governance structure include:

The **Science and Technology Alliance for Global Sustainability**: this partnership comprises the International Council for Science (ICSU), the International Social Science Council (ISSC), the Belmont Forum, 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 an observer. The Alliance is establishing Future Earth and will promote and support its development. It may grow to include other organisations seen as essential to the successful implementation of the initiative.

The **Governing Council**: this body, advised by the Scientific and the Engagement Committees, will provide strategic guidance for the initiative and will be the overarching decision-making body. It will consist of scientists, policymakers, business and industry, and other stakeholders. The Science and Technology Alliance for Global Sustainability will act as an interim Governing Council starting in 2013 until Future Earth is fully operational.

The **Science Committee**: it will provide scientific guidance and will ensure that the science of Future Earth is of the highest quality, building on the excellence that the global environmental change programmes² have developed over the years, and take on emerging issues. The Science Committee will propose to the Governing Council projects or other scientific activities, and new research themes if required. It will represent the full spectrum of global environmental change science from natural science to social sciences, humanities and engineering, as well as science from other sectors, such as government and industry. It will comprise around eighteen appointed members. Especially in the early stages, the Science Committee will be responsible for integrating projects and activities of the current global environmental change programmes into Future Earth. The Science Committee will be established early in 2013.

² DIVERSITAS— an international programme of biodiversity science, International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (IGBP), International Human Dimensions Programme (IHDP), World Climate Research Programme (WCRP) and their Earth System Science Partnership (ESSP).

The **Engagement Committee**: it will provide leadership and guidance on engaging stakeholders throughout the entire research chain from co-design to dissemination, and ensure that Future Earth produces the knowledge that society needs. Comprising representatives from the groups of stakeholders described in Figure 1, it will ensure that the components of Future Earth have credible co-design processes, and have oversight on the implementation of these processes. By bringing in voices from business, civil society and government, the Engagement Committee will thus provide a mechanism to ensure that the science is relevant to end users. It will more broadly provide guidance on outreach, fund-raising, communications, education and regional activities. The Engagement Committee will have the same status and priority as the Science Committee, and the two will work closely together to provide advice and recommendations to the Governing Council.

The **Executive Secretariat**: it will ensure that the strategies and activities approved by the Governing Council are realized. The Secretariat will carry out the day-to-day functions of Future Earth, and will act as an integrator and facilitator. The Secretariat will support regional nodes and partnerships, and their linkages to the research themes (each research theme will have a steering committee and an office), as well as existing and new projects. The Science and Technology Alliance for Global Sustainability will issue a call to identify nations or organizations wanting to host and support the Secretariat. Options to distribute the Secretariat at the regional level will be explored as part of this process.

Regional nodes and partnerships - linking global and regional scales

Future Earth is being designed as a globally distributed platform to ensure that research, capabilities and partnerships are developed at the most relevant level(s) and can effectively support a transition towards global sustainability. Regions are at the intersection of national policies and global coordination mechanisms and have therefore a key role in linking across scales, integrating knowledge and catalysing initiatives. It is therefore essential for Future Earth to work in partnership with existing regional networks to identify specific research priorities and activities, define the integration and coordination needs and the most relevant arrangements to implement Future Earth in the regions. The form(s) and functions of the Future Earth regional entities (nodes, networks, partnerships etc.) and their interface with both global and local level are to be defined.

The key principles guiding the design of the regional features of Future Earth are:

- Regional relevance and global coherence of the research and coordination mechanisms;
- Partnership building;
- Adding value to existing initiatives;
- Fit-for-purpose structure; and
- Pluralism.