

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Future Earth: New global platform for sustainability research presented at Planet Under Pressure**

**A new 10-year initiative unifying and scaling up existing ICSU-sponsored global environmental change activities, will deliver solution oriented research in partnership with society**

**London, UK (27 March)** — An alliance of international partners from global science, research funding and UN bodies, announced a bold new 10-year initiative on global environmental change for sustainability at the [Planet under Pressure](#) conference on Tuesday. [Future Earth – research for global sustainability](#), operational in 2013, will provide a cutting-edge platform to coordinate scientific research which can respond to the most critical social and environmental challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century at global and regional levels.

“This initiative will link global environmental change and fundamental human development questions”, said Prof. Diana Liverman, co-Director of the Institute of the Environment at the University of Arizona and co-Chair of the team that is designing Future Earth. “Global environmental change affects our ability to access food, water, energy, increases our vulnerability to hazardous events, and erodes our ability to eradicate poverty. Only by actively engaging natural sciences, social sciences and humanities and working with the full range of users and producers of knowledge, can we provide a full understanding of global change and its impact on societies and ecosystems.”

Future Earth will have a new global governance body and secretariat, building on the strengths of the existing core global environmental change programme, which are co-sponsored by ICSU. Its official launch will be in June, 2012, at the United Nations “Rio+20” conference. Future Earth will embody an interdisciplinary approach to provide early warning signals of environmental risk and change, and stimulate new research to support the transition of society towards sustainability.

The development of new pathways for global sustainability requires a new way of doing research, expanding and improving our knowledge of transformations in societies and biophysical processes, and how they interact across scales. “Future Earth will support the creation of that knowledge through multidimensional and interdisciplinary research”, said Roberto Sanchez, Professor at the Department of Urban and Environmental Studies, El Colegio de la Frontera Norte Mexico. Sanchez added that “regional perspectives and multiple sociocultural approaches are essential tools to incorporate in Future Earth research to understand the complexity and diversity of our societies.”

This interdisciplinary initiative arises from the ICSU-led Earth System Visioning process, a three-year consultation with researchers and research users concluded in early 2011 that identified options for a unified approach to Earth system research for global sustainability. Collaboration with other international organizations has strengthened the basis of the initiative, which is now jointly supported by ICSU, the International Social Science Council (ISSC), the Belmont Forum of funding agencies, UNEP, UNESCO and UNU, with WMO as an observer.

“We are very proud of the enormous scientific achievements of the ICSU-sponsored Global Environmental Change Programmes over the last decades”, said Prof. Yuan T Lee, winner of the 1986 Nobel Prize in Chemistry and ICSU President. Lee stressed that “unifying the different efforts through this new broad partnership will provide the step-change needed in international research coordination to face the challenges posed by global environmental change”. He added, “the enthusiasm and engagement of the whole community will be essential to the success of this endeavour.”

For more information on Future Earth, see: <http://www.icsu.org/future-earth/>

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#### **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.