



ICSU Insight

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Science conference marks end of International Polar Year

More than 2300 participants at the largest-ever polar research conference, held in Oslo 8-12 June, marked the end of the International Polar Year (IPY) 2007-2008. Sponsored by ICSU and the World Meteorological Organization, the IPY was a multi-year, multidisciplinary international collaboration that brought together thousands of scientists, educators, data managers, and others from 60 countries. The Oslo conference showcased the broad range of science and education activities that were stimulated by IPY.

In a ceremony to mark the end of IPY, ICSU Executive Director Deliang Chen thanked the IPY participants, particularly the members of the ICSU Planning Group that framed the programme in 2003–04, the IPY Joint Committee that oversaw the implementation, the subgroups of the Joint Committee, and the hosts and staff of the International Programme Office. The work of these key groups helped to channel the energy and creativity of the entire polar community under a common framework and make this IPY a spectacular success.

The [Polar Information Commons](#) (a CODATA-led initiative seeded by the ICSU Grants Programme) was launched at the conference, and ICSU bodies such as the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research and the International Arctic Science Committee played key roles. The IPY Joint Committee announced its Summary Report on IPY that will be released later this year, and its Education and Outreach Subcommittee released a teaching resource called [Polar Science and Global Climate](#), which is available for [purchase online](#). The ICSU statement on Universality in the Polar Regions was also highlighted at the meeting, as well as a summary of ICSU's involvement in this IPY.

[More information](#) is available online.

Strategic Planning

Overview

The framework for the [2nd ICSU Strategic Plan](#) is being developed under the aegis of the Committee on Scientific Planning and Review (CSPR). An initial draft was presented and discussed at the meeting of Scientific Unions in April and subsequently approved by the Executive Board.

Visioning for Earth System Science

Following extensive consultations, a pre-publication draft of the document [Grand Challenges in Global Sustainability Research: A Systems Approach to Research Priorities for the Decade](#) is available. This document is the first step in designing an integrated Earth system research framework. Its implications, in terms of the international institutional structures for addressing the challenges, were discussed at a series of meetings hosted by UNESCO in Paris, in June—an Open Consultative Forum, attended by 150 scientists, including representatives of many ICSU members and partner organizations, was followed by a two-day sponsors' meeting. There was overall consensus that some change to the existing structures, including closer interaction with funding agencies, is necessary.

Foresight Analysis

The Task Team leading the ICSU [Foresight Analysis](#) met in April to move the process into the next phase: scenario development. The Task Team decided on the general framework for the exploratory scenarios, which will be based on the input, received from the ICSU community, for key drivers of international science over the next 20 years. These exploratory scenarios will form the basis of the next broad consultation with the ICSU community in October 2010.

Science Education Review

The [ad-hoc Review Panel on Science Education](#), set up to advise ICSU on what it might do in this field, is currently examining the responses to a survey on education initiatives that was sent to ICSU Members earlier in the year. The survey sought to learn from the experiences of the community with respect to education initiatives that had been taken in the past, and seek opinion as to what role, if any, ICSU should play in science education in the years to come. The second meeting of the Review Panel will take place in Paris in September.

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Planning and Coordinating Research

Hazards and Disasters

The International Programme Office for the [Integrated Research on Disaster Risk](#) (IRDR) programme has been established in Beijing, at the Centre for Earth Observation and Digital Earth (CEODE) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. The Chinese Association for Science and Technology (CAST) has guaranteed financial support for the office throughout the 10-year lifespan of the programme. The newly appointed IRDR Executive Director, Dr Jane Rovins, took up her duties in Beijing at the beginning of June. Among her priorities are appointing two staff members and establishing a dedicated IRDR website.

An event to mark the opening of the office is being planned to coincide with the fourth meeting of the IRDR Scientific Committee in Beijing, 15–17 November. Discussions are also underway for a major IRDR conference to be held in Beijing in April 2011.

Urban Health and Well-being

The final meeting of the [Urban Health and Human Wellbeing Planning Group](#) took place in Paris in May. A draft proposal for a new interdisciplinary science programme 'Health and Wellbeing in the Changing Urban Environment: A Systems Analysis Approach' will be circulated to ICSU Members for comment in the coming weeks.

Global Environmental Change Programmes

ICSU's global environmental change programmes—Diversitas, an international programme of biodiversity science, the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (IGBP), the International Human Dimensions Programme of Global Environmental Change (IHDP) and the World Climate Research Programme (WCRP)—are sponsoring '[Planet Under Pressure: new knowledge, new solutions](#)' a major conference that will bring together the world's leading thinkers on global-change research to discuss solutions to two challenges: what will it take to make food, energy and water accessible to nine billion people in a way that is sustainable? And, what inevitable environmental changes must we prepare for? The conference will take place in 2012 and will feed into the UN Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (Rio+20).

WCRP will hold an Open Science Conference in Denver, USA, 24–28 October 2011. The conference '[Climate Research in Service to Society](#)' will bring together the international scientific community, working to advance understanding and prediction of variability and change of the Earth's physical climate system on all space and time scales.

Global Observing Systems

The [13th meeting of the Science and Technology Committee](#) (STC) of the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) was held in Ankara, Turkey, in March. The committee reviewed implementation of the [STC Roadmap](#) and the GEO Tasks in the disasters Societal Benefit Area. The committee also endorsed a proposal for an STC report on how the Global Earth Observing System of Systems (GEOSS) will advance Earth system science and technology. The meeting was hosted by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK)—an ICSU National Member.

Belmont Challenge

ICSU, at the request of funders of international global change research, has been undertaking an analysis of the international research capability to respond to the [Belmont Challenge](#)—delivering knowledge to support human action and adaptation to regional environmental change. A draft analysis report was sent to 60 international experts for review, with 40 review reports received at the end of May. The comments and suggestions have been incorporated into the report by the panel overseeing the analysis. The final report will be submitted to the ICSU Executive Board for endorsement, with publication expected in August.

Grants Programme

Applications are invited for the 2011 ICSU Grants Programme. Please note the Grants Programme is strictly reserved for ICSU Members and bodies—lead applicants must be ICSU Scientific Unions, Interdisciplinary Bodies or Joint Initiatives. The Programme Statement and Schedule, as well as the application form are available in the [Member Zone](#) of the website. The closing date for applications is 1 December 2010.

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Science for Policy

Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

The [Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services](#) (IPBES) has been given the green light by representatives of 85 countries meeting under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Busan, Republic of Korea. ICSU, together with DIVERSITAS and IHDP, participated in discussions on behalf of the scientific community. The recommendation to establish IPBES will go to the 65th session of the UN General Assembly in September—the final step in a long process. If the UN General Assembly decides to establish IPBES, it is possible that it will be launched before the end of 2010, the [International Year of Biodiversity](#).

Commission on Sustainable Development

The 18th session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), which took place at the UN headquarters in New York in May, focused on transport, waste management, chemicals and mining, as well as sustainable consumption and production. This

session reviewed progress in meeting sustainable development goals in these areas as well as obstacles and opportunities on the way forward. ICSU, together with WFEO, submitted a [discussion paper](#) as formal input to this session. The ICSU delegation, which included representatives of the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) and IHDP, participated in the thematic discussions on the topics covered by the review session. WFEO and ICSU co-organized a side event on S&T capacity building and innovation related to the CSD-18 topical areas. The outcomes of the CSD-18 review session are available in the [Chair's Summary](#).

UN Conference on Sustainable Development—Rio+20

In December 2009, the United Nations General Assembly decided to organize a Conference on Environment and Sustainable Development in Rio in 2012 (Rio+20). ICSU and the World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO) have been invited to co-organize the input from the Scientific and Technological Community in the intergovernmental preparatory committee, which met in May for the first time. The [Chair's summary](#) of the preparatory meeting is available online. ICSU made several interventions during the three-day meeting, highlighting Rio+20 as an opportunity to address the widespread failures in implementing the outcomes of the previous sustainable development summits and to prevent serious risks incurred by humanity due to global environmental change. The [statement from the S&T community](#) is available in the resource centre.

IPCC Review

The InterAcademy Council (IAC) has announced the names of the [12 committee members](#) who are conducting the [review of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPCC). Two ICSU Executive Board members, Abdul Hamid Zakri (Malaysia) and Goverdhan Mehta (India), are serving on the committee, which is chaired by Harold T. Shapiro.

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Universality of Science

Freedom and Responsibility

[Dr Roger Pfister](#) has been appointed Executive Secretary for the Committee on Freedom and Responsibility in the Conduct of Science (CFRS). Roger will take up this position in Berne, on 1 October. The appointment has been made possible with generous support from the Swiss Academy of Sciences.

Research Integrity

The [2nd World Conference on Research Integrity](#) will take place in Singapore, 21–24 July. ICSU, through CFRS, is one of several co-sponsors. CFRS members have been involved in organising, and contributing to, a number of sessions, which focus on international, institutional and individual responsibilities and mechanisms for maintaining integrity in research.

Statement on Universality of Science in the Polar Regions

ICSU has released a [statement](#) calling for actions to reinforce and build on the international collaborative spirit witnessed during the International Polar Year 2007-2008 (IPY). With the polar-related issues now confronting humanity, the open conduct of polar science and accessibility of scientific data and results will be the cornerstone of scientific progress and informed dialogue and decision making.

Data and Information

The Scientific Committee for the ICSU World Data System (WDS) met for the second time in Paris, in March. The committee worked on finalizing the criteria for WDS membership and approved the draft [constitution for the system](#). It approved a logo, made significant progress on the certification process and the [WDS website](#), and affirmed WDS support for the implementation of the Polar Information Commons (PIC) initiative, led by ICSU's Committee on Data for Science and Technology (CODATA). The Committee also decided to establish an International Programme Office to support its work and facilitate the establishment of the new system. A call to host the office has been sent to ICSU Members and partners.

The Scientific Committee will meet again in September in Cape Town just prior to the CODATA conference (see [item below](#)), where the committee will organize sessions on the challenges for the new system, including data publication and polar data.

Strategic Coordinating Committee on Information and Data (SCCID)

The [Strategic Coordinating Committee for Information and Data](#) (SCCID) held its second meeting in Paris, in March. The committee has begun implementing its agreed work plan. CODATA has joined the committee as *ex officio* following a decision of the ICSU Executive Board. The next SCCID meeting will be in September in Paris.

CODATA International Conference

The [22nd CODATA International Conference](#) 'Scientific Information for Society: Scientific Data and Sustainable Development' will take place in Cape Town, South Africa, 24–27 September. The conference, organized in collaboration with the National Research Foundation, will provide an international forum for scientists and policy makers to discuss global data challenges, including the critical role that scientific data and information plays in the scientific, social, economic and policy evolution of nations. Young scientists will figure prominently in the activities of the conference.

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ICSU in the Regions

Africa

ICSU is [inviting applications](#) for the position of Director of the ICSU Regional Office for Africa (Sub-Saharan Africa). The Regional Office was established in Pretoria in 2005 and is hosted by South Africa's National Research Foundation. This position is open to citizens of countries of the African continent, who are also currently located in South Africa. The closing date for applications is 15 July 2010.

The first [Conference on Physics of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries](#) (CPLP) will take place in Maputo, Mozambique, 12–16 September 2010. ICSU is co-sponsoring the conference, along with the Committee on Space Research (COSPAR) and other local and international organizations. The Executive Director is serving on the Scientific Committee for the conference, which will bring together physicists from Africa, Europe and Latin America.

The Regional Office for Africa is supporting the [15th World Congress of Food Science and Technology](#) (IUFoST), which will be held in Cape Town, South Africa, 22–26 August. The congress 'Food Science Solutions in an Evolving World' will highlight the important role food scientists play in global issues such as food security, safety, preservation and processing, as well as consumer education and environmental sustainability.

More information and news is available on the [Regional Office for Africa website](#).

Asia and the Pacific

The 9th meeting of the Regional Committee for Asia and the Pacific took place in Kuala Lumpur, in April. The committee appointed a Science Planning Group on Health and Urban Environmental Change, following nominations from ICSU Members. Activities from this initiative will dovetail with the proposed global, urban health and wellbeing programme (see [earlier item](#)). While in Malaysia, three committee members, including the chair, spoke at a seminar '[Science to Inspire and to Help Us](#)'. The seminar was supported by Open University Malaysia and the Academy of Sciences Malaysia and was shown live over the internet. The next committee meeting will be hosted by the Australian Academy of Science (AAS) in Canberra, 11–12 November 2010.

The Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) and the Regional Committee are developing an Experts Database and a Personnel/Infrastructure Mapping Project as part of implementing the priority research areas for the region. ICSU Members and research institutions in the region were consulted in February to determine what information should be

included in the project. The Regional Office is also exploring how the database can link to other information databases (e.g. publications) in the region.

The [review of the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific](#) (ROAP) is underway, with the first meeting of the Review Panel, chaired by Marie-Lise Chanin (France), taking place in June. The panel discussed the online consultation of ICSU Members, which received more than 60 responses. The site visit will take place 9–11 August and the final report will go to the Committee on Scientific Planning and Review (CSPR) in September.

More information and news is available on the [ROAP website](#).

Latin America and the Caribbean

The 8th meeting of the Regional Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean was held in Rio de Janeiro in May. Discussions centred on the review of the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC) and its relocation to Mexico in September. José Antonio de la Peña was also re-elected chair of the committee.

The panel for the [review of the Regional Office](#) visited the site in May, holding meetings with the Regional Director, the Regional Committee and its chair, and representatives of the host, the Brazilian Academy of Sciences. A report has been drafted and will go to CSPR in September.

ROLAC will relocate to Mexico at the end of September, following the completion of the three-year agreement with the Brazilian Academy of Sciences. A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed by ICSU, the Mexican National Council for Science and Technology (CONACyT) and the new host, the Mexican Academy of Sciences. In light of the relocation, ICSU and CONACyT are [seeking a new Director](#) for the Regional Office. Applications are invited from citizens of countries of the Latin America and Caribbean region. The closing date for applications is 31 August 2010.

More information and news is available on the [ROLAC website](#).

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ICSU Governance and Policies

Executive Board

Decisions from the 102nd meeting of the Executive Board will be available in the [resource centre](#) of the ICSU website in mid-July.

Weighted voting

The [Ad hoc Group on Weighted Voting](#) met for two days in May and has written a proposal recommending weighted voting for finance issues only (e.g. budget and approval of accounts). The proposal will be sent to Members for comments before going to the Executive Board in October. The proposal will also be discussed with the 11 countries that signed the petition asking for this issue to be investigated.

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National and Union Members

Unions Meeting

The International Scientific Unions met in Paris in April. The theme of the meeting was Strengthening the involvement of Unions in ICSU activities, with sessions divided into: ICSU strategy and programmes; universality of science; and science for policy. One clear message from the meeting was the value of creating briefing materials on 'what is ICSU'—to ensure that all parties are sufficiently familiar with the workings of ICSU. The secretariat is currently developing these materials. Presentations from the meeting are available in the [Member Zone](#).

New National Members

ICSU is pleased to welcome two new National Members—Angola's Foundation of Science and Development, and the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The new Members were admitted by the ICSU Executive Board in April, and bring the total number of National Members to 121, covering 141 countries.

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ICSU Secretariat

Annual Report 2009

The [ICSU Annual Report 2009](#) is now available.

Staff Vacancy

ICSU is seeking a Science Officer to assist with the planning and implementation of its initiatives, with a focus on sustainability research including global environmental change. This is a permanent position located at the ICSU secretariat in Paris. Applications close 16 August 2010. [More information](#) is available on the website.

Staff Changes

The ICSU secretariat has welcomed two new staff—both seconded from National Members. [Hwey-Ling \(Vivien\) Lee](#) has been seconded from the Academy of Sciences located in Taipei for three years and will provide support to the visioning process. [Emilia Koivisto](#) comes to the secretariat from the Delegation of the Finnish Academies of Science and Letters. During her four-month stay at ICSU she will provide support for the work of the Committee on Scientific Planning and Review.

Staff Retreat

The secretariat in Paris held a staff retreat in April. Discussions during the two days focused on strategic planning (which included a SWOT analysis) and communication, picking up on issues raised at the Unions meeting earlier that month.

Website and Newsletter Survey

A [summary report](#) from the website and newsletter survey is available in the resource centre.

Contact : [Jacinta Legg](#)

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