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## ICSU Insight

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### Planning and Coordinating Research

#### Hazards and Disasters

Preparations for ICSU's major new international, interdisciplinary programme on Natural and Human-induced Environmental Hazards and Disasters are moving forward well. The second meeting of the programme's Scoping Group, chaired by Gordon McBean, will take place on 23-25 January 2007. The Group will examine the first drafts of a report, prepared following its first meeting in June this year. The ICSU Executive Board is expected to pronounce on the final Report – and the proposed programme – in July 2007. A draft report will be sent to ICSU Members and Interdisciplinary Bodies for review.

#### International Polar Year (IPY), 2007-2008

It's official: The International Polar Year 2007-2008 will be launched on 1 March 2007 at the "Palais de la Découverte", a famous science museum in central Paris. A press conference is being organized for the event by IPY's co-sponsors, ICSU and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), and the IPY Programme Office in Cambridge. The event will take place in conjunction with the IPY Joint-Committee meeting being held on 28 February and 2 March. More than a dozen countries are also planning national launch events on or around 1 March and an international IPY group is working hard to stimulate activities in schools and science centres around the globe. ➡


#### Human Health

Several Members of the ICSU Scoping Group on Human Health met with the Executive Committee of the Science for Health and Wellbeing initiative, which is being developed by a large group of Scientific Unions. There was common agreement that a systems analysis approach to population health challenges, which integrates knowledge from different disciplines, should be explored further. This will be followed up at the next Scoping Group meeting in January 2007. ➡

## Earth Systems Science Partnership (ESSP)


ESSP is a Partnership for the integrated study of the Earth System, the changes that are occurring to the system and the implications of these changes for global sustainability. The ESSP was set up following the first Global Change Open Science Conference in Amsterdam 2001 by the four global change research programmes (DIVERSITAS, IGBP, IHDP, WCRP), all of which are sponsored by ICSU.

The Second [Global Change Science Conference](#) focused on ESSP achievements and was held in Beijing, China on 9-12 November 2007. The Conference issued a [statement](#) and the ICSU Executive Director chaired two sessions addressing the needs to link global change research with various stakeholders. These sessions also follow from earlier initiatives by ICSU and the International Group of Funding Agencies (IGFA) for Global Change Research to link the global change and development research communities.


In view of the importance of the impacts on human health, the Beijing Conference launched the Global Environmental Change and Human Health Project. 

Recognizing that there are issues special to regions, the Beijing Conference also initiated the Monsoon Asia Integrated Regional Study (MAIRS) to examine the threats posed to populations and ecosystems in Monsoon Asia.


At a meeting in Beijing, the Chairs and Directors of the Global Change Research Programmes decided to recommend that an ESSP Scientific Committee be established by ICSU.

ICSU and IGFA have established a Panel of Experts, Chaired by Professor Louise Fresco (Amsterdam University, the Netherlands) to review ESSP in 2007. 

## World Climate Research Programme

A workshop organised by the World Climate Research Programme (WCRP) and co-sponsored by the ICSU has confirmed that global mean sea-levels are rising almost twice as fast as in the previous century - at a rate of just over 3 mm per year now, compared to a rate of under 2 mm per year before. The result was presented at the Workshop on Understanding Sea-level Rise and Variability - hosted by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission at UNESCO in June this year. A Summary Statement issued by the workshop participants has been published. 

## International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change (IHDP)

ICSU, together with the International Social Science Council (ISSC), have decided to invite the United Nations University (UNU) to become a third sponsor of IHDP. It has also been decided that the IHDP Secretariat will move from the University of Bonn to the UN Complex in Bonn. 

## Review of Global Environment Change Programmes

At its meeting in February 2007, the ICSU Committee on Scientific Planning and Review (CSPR) will establish two Panels to review the [International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme](#) and the [World Climate Research Programme](#) in 2007-2008. The reviews will be done in collaboration with IGFA and the [World Meteorological Organization](#), as well as the [Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission](#) of UNESCO for WCRP.

## Group on Earth Observations (GEO)

GEO has been set-up to guide the development of the Global Earth Observation System of

Systems, [GEOSS](#). GEO-III was held in Bonn, Germany on 28-29 November 2006. GEO decided to accept DIVERSITAS as a new Participating Organization. COSPAR was also represented on the ICSU delegation.

GEO-IV will be arranged in Cape Town, South Africa on 28-29 November 2007 immediately followed, on 30 November, by the 4th Earth Observation Summit.

On 30 November 2006, ICSU co-chaired a meeting of the GEO Science and Technology Committee. Apart from reviewing the GEO 2007-2009 Work Plan, the Committee decided to prepare a document describing "The Role of Science and Technology in GEO" for presentation to GEO-IV and the Ministerial Earth Observation Summit. The document will outline why science and technology is important for the development of GEOSS. It will also describe the crucial importance of GEOSS for scientific research.

## Review of the ICSU-UNESCO Grants Programme

The review committee for the grants programme met in November. A report of its assessment of both the past and future of the programme, including views submitted by Members, is in preparation. This will go to the next meeting of the Committee on Scientific Planning and Review in February. Once approved, it will then be circulated in draft form to all ICSU Members and Interdisciplinary Bodies, for consideration and comment.

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## Science for Policy

### International Science Panel on Renewable Energies (ISPRES)

ICSU, together with the Renewable Energy Policy Network (REN21) and the International Council of Academies of Engineering and Technological Sciences (CAETS), has established an International Science Panel on Renewable Energies (ISPRES), as a mechanism for providing objective, strategic guidance for renewable energy R&D efforts worldwide. The Panel Membership was recently finalized, and the first meeting will be held in January 2007. [↗](#)

### Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-15)

The 15th session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-15), being held from 30 April to 11 May 2007, is the second in a two-year CSD cycle focusing on the issues of energy, climate change, air pollution and industrial development. In its usual role, ICSU is organizing input from the scientific and technological (S&T) community into the CSD process. Drawing upon earlier suggestions from the ICSU family, the Secretariat has contributed to the UN Secretary General's report to CSD-15, and submitted a document summarizing the S&T community's recommendations for policy actions. [↗](#)

### Biosecurity and the Life Sciences

ICSU cosponsored an international meeting on "Science and Technology Developments and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention" (BTWC) in London in September. A joint Royal Society- ICSU-IAP statement was subsequently issued to inform the formal review of the BTWC by governments in November. [↗](#)

### Observatory on Intellectual Property

At its meeting in October, the Executive Board approved a preliminary proposal for ICSU to develop an Observatory on Intellectual Property (IP). IP policies have a major impact on science and access to scientific products, including data and information, and these policies are increasingly being developed at the international level in organisations, such as the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO). The scientific community does not currently have a

concerted mechanism for monitoring and influencing these policies and the Observatory would be designed to address this deficit. ➤

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## Universality of Science

### Regional Office for Africa

In 2006, the Regional Office for Africa set up four important scoping groups on sustainable energy, health and human well-being, natural and human-induced hazards and disasters, and global change. These groups prepared draft science plans which were debated and approved by a broader scientific community at Second Regional Consultative Forum in Boksburg, South Africa on 25–27 September 2006. The final science plans will be presented to ICSU's Regional Committee for Africa in March 2007 and will soon be available on the Office's website.

The Regional Office for Africa and Regional Committee for Africa were also actively involved in two high-level conferences of the African Union (AU). The first was the Congress of African Scientists and Policymakers (CASP) in Alexandria, Egypt (27-29 October 2006), which was aimed at promoting dialogue between Science & Technology (S&T) practitioners and policy makers on the development of S&T in Africa. The second was the Extra-Ordinary Conference of the African Ministers' Council on S&T (AMCOST) in Cairo, Egypt (23-24 November 2006), aimed at preparing for the AU Heads of State and Government Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in January 2007. Reports of both meetings will soon be available on the website of the Regional Office. ➤

### Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

Climate changes taking place at the poles will affect the entire globe so how can we engage countries not traditionally involved in polar research to become more involved? The ICSU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and SCAR (ICSU Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research) is taking a step forward in this direction by organising a one-day awareness-raising forum on the implications of rapid warming in the polar regions on Earth systems. The forum will aim to highlight the collaborative mechanisms and international assistance available for countries wishing to engage in polar research, and the opportunities that lie ahead for these nations. The forum, which is being organized in conjunction with the 3rd Malaysian International Seminar on Antarctica (MISA-3), will be held on 23 March 2007 in Kota Kinabalu in Malaysia. A draft programme of the Forum is available from the Asia-Pacific Office. The ICSU Regional Committee for Asia and the Pacific will next meet in Tehran, Iran, in early March 2007. ➤

### Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean

The Regional Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean had its first meeting in Panama on 15 October. Professor [José Antonio de la Peña](#) from Mexico was elected Chair of the [Regional Committee](#). The meeting was followed by the First ICSU Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean, hosted by the University of Panama and organized in collaboration with the UNESCO Regional Office for Science in Latin America and the Caribbean. Four initial priorities were identified: sustainable energy, biodiversity, hazards and natural disasters, and education in mathematics.

Professor [Alice Abreu](#) from Brazil has been appointed Director of the ICSU Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, which will be hosted by the [Brazilian Academy of Sciences](#) with generous financial support from the Government of Brazil. The inauguration of the Regional Office is planned for April 2007. ➤

## Eastern and South-Eastern Europe

A conference entitled “Global Science and National Policies: the Role of Academies”, bringing together some 50 senior officers of the Academies of Sciences of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, will be held in Chisinau (Moldova) on 4-5 May 2007. Jointly organized by ICSU and UNESCO (through UNESCO’s Regional Offices in Venice and Moscow), and hosted by the Academy of Sciences of Moldova, the event will seek to improve the role of the Academies in international collaborative research in several key strategic fields of science. These include sustainable development, science education and establishing science policies as part of national development. Selected experts from Western European academies will also be invited to share their experiences with their Eastern European colleagues.

## Freedom and Responsibility

The new Committee on Freedom and Responsibility in the conduct of Science (CFRS) held its first meeting in Paris in November. Several important issues were addressed, including challenges to the Universality of science in the USA and the Middle East. The Committee also began to define its future modus operandi and priorities and, in doing so, emphasized the critical importance of linking with the ICSU Members, Interdisciplinary Bodies and other key international partners. ❏

## Persecution of scientists in Iraq

Following its first meeting the CFRS wrote a letter, published in Nature, calling for the global scientific community to demonstrate its solidarity with scientists in Iraq. It is now known that several hundred Iraqi academics have been systematically murdered and many others tortured and persecuted in recent months. The CFRS urges international organizations to join ICSU in searching for ways to bring this aggression against Iraqi scientists to an end. ❏

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## ICSU Governance and Policies

### 75 Years of ICSU

#### Young Scientists Conference

In September, ICSU invited all Members and Interdisciplinary Bodies to nominate and sponsor outstanding young scientists to attend a unique event, which will take place in Lindau, Germany on 4-6 April 2007. Over 100 nominations have been received so far and formal invitations are now being issued. ❏

One of the co-organisers of the conference, the World Academy of Young Scientists (WAYS), also reports on the launch of their new community website. The website is dedicated to promoting collective activities and fostering interdisciplinary and intercultural dialogue and anyone working in science is welcome to join and add their contribution to the network. Launched by UNESCO in 2004, and supported by ICSU, WAYS is a non-profit, independent organization dedicated to uniting young researchers at both the local and global levels. WAYS currently has around 2000 members representing more than 100 different nations. ❏

## 94th Meeting of Executive Board

The 94th Meeting of the Executive Board took place in Paris on 25-26 October. The Board was happy to note that the Deputy Minister for Higher Education and Research, François Goulard, had affirmed France's commitment to providing permanent annual support to ICSU of €500 000. This announcement was first made at ICSU's 75th Anniversary Symposium on 4 July 2006. In

the light of this commitment the revised budget for 2007 was approved. The Board also discussed several other issues and activities related to the ICSU Strategic Plan, which are covered elsewhere in this newsletter. The full record of decisions is available here: [↗](#)

## Meeting of the Scientific Unions

One of the major issues discussed by the Executive Board was the relationship between the Scientific Unions and the ICSU Executive. The next meeting of all ICSU Unions, which occur at 18-month intervals, is scheduled for 23-24 April 2007, in Rome. A draft agenda for this meeting, the theme for which is "ICSU and its Unions working together to deliver the ICSU Strategy", was agreed by the Board and subsequently circulated to all Unions for consideration.

## Scientific Planning and Review

The report from the 12th meeting of the Committee on Scientific Planning and Review (CSPR) in September is now available. [↗](#)

## New National Members and Scientific Associates

At its 94th Meeting, the ICSU Executive Board unanimously agreed to admit seven new National Members, bringing the number of National Members to 111. These are:

- Ministry of Communications, Science and Technology of Botswana [↗](#)
- Cameroon Academy of Sciences [↗](#)
- National Research Council of Malawi [↗](#)
- Scientific Research Association of Mozambique [↗](#)
- Kigali Institute of Science and Technology (KIST), Rwanda [↗](#)
- Association des Chercheurs Sénégalais [↗](#)
- Zambian Academy of Sciences [↗](#)

Cameroon, Mozambique and Senegal were previously National Associates. The new arrivals are thanks to endeavours made by the Africa Regional Office.

ICSU is also pleased to welcome a New Scientific Associate, the International Commission for Acoustics (ICA), admitted at the 93rd EB meeting, which brings the total number of Scientific Associates to 20. [↗](#)

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## ICSU Secretariat

### Positions available

There are two staff positions available at the ICSU Secretariat in Paris. The first is for a Science Officer, to take over from Laurie Geller, who will be leaving in May 2007 after three and a half years with ICSU. Laurie was partially supported with funding that was generously provided by US-NAS during most of this period. The second is for a Communications Officer to take over from Belle Dumé, who will be leaving at the end of this year. Belle only joined the ICSU staff in September this year but is leaving for personal reasons. Interested candidates are invited to consult the advertisements for these two positions on the ICSU website:

Science Officer [↗](#)

Communications Officer [↗](#)

### Best wishes for 2007

As 2006 draws to a close, the ICSU secretariat communicates its thanks to all those who have contributed to strengthening international science for the benefit of society during the year.

**Best wishes for 2007**

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