



## ICSU Insight

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#### **ICSU inaugurates new building**

More than 80 invited guests joined ICSU President Goverdhan Mehta and the Executive Board in inaugurating the new building for the ICSU Secretariat in May. The building also hosts the Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment (SCOPE) and the Committee on Data for Science and Technology (CODATA). Distinguished guests included Jean Dercourt, Secrétaire Perpétuel de l'Académie des Sciences, Maurice Quénet, Recteur de l'Académie de Paris and Jean François Stephan from the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research.

The new building is more centrally located, not far from the Champs Elysées and the Arc de Triomphe, and has excellent facilities with more spacious meeting rooms and videoconferencing.

ICSU would like to express its gratitude to the Government of France, which generously offered the building as a replacement for the previous building.

[Speeches and photographs](#) from the inauguration are available online.

### Planning and Coordinating Research

#### Urban health and well-being

The membership of the [Planning Group on Health and Well-being in a changing Urban Environment](#) has been finalized, with the appointment of co-Chairs Françoise Barten and Landis McKellar. The Group met for the second time at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) in Austria in mid-June, where they interacted with IIASA scientists to explore how systems analysis and modelling methodologies could be applied to integrate the diverse factors that influence urban health.

## Hazards and disasters

The [report](#) from the ICSU [Planning Group on Natural and Human-induced Environmental Hazards and Disasters](#) has been published. *Integrated Research on Disaster Risk – addressing the challenge of natural and human-induced environmental hazards*, is available in hardcopy and online.

The Executive Board agreed to recommend to the General Assembly that ICSU establish a major new interdisciplinary programme of ten years' duration entitled Integrated Research on Disaster Risk (IRDR), in collaboration with other international organizations. A final meeting of the Planning Group was held during the [International Disaster and Risk Conference](#) in Davos, Switzerland on 26 August. The conference provided further opportunities to discuss collaboration with other organizations in the area of disaster risk reduction.

## International Polar Year

The Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) and the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC) organized the first International Polar Year (IPY) [Open Science Conference](#) in St Petersburg, Russia, in July. This was the largest polar science meeting yet held, with over 1100 participants. Key agreements were signed defining SCAR and IASCs relationships with: (1) the International Association of Cryospheric Science (part of the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics); (2) the Climate and Cryosphere (CliC) project of the World Climate Research Programme; and (3) the Association of Polar Early Career Scientists – a group of 1400 young scientists developed within the framework of the IPY.

The ICSU-WMO IPY Joint Committee met in St Petersburg prior to the conference, with discussions focusing on the legacy of IPY. In particular, the need to continue the coordination function, currently provided by the International Programme Office, at least until the IPY Oslo Science Conference in 2010. A great deal of work still lies ahead with respect to data management, and ensuring the long-term future of the education, outreach and communication and early-career scientists networks. The Committee also discussed the celebrations for the end of the IPY observance period in February 2009 – which will be held in Geneva.

The fifth quarterly International Polar Day took place on 18 June. The day focused on land and life, in particular permafrost, snow and ice cover and how biological communities survive through remarkable adaptations and extensive migration.

The sixth International Polar Day was on 24 September and focused on the people who live in the Arctic and the skills, strategies and community knowledge they use to survive in polar conditions. Climate change and renewed exploitation present urgent challenges to Arctic people. More information on Polar Days and other activities is available on the [IPY website](#).

## Global Change Programmes

### Earth System Science Partnership

The [report](#) from CSPR-IGFA review of the Earth System Science Partnership is available online. In May an ESSP retreat was hosted by John Schellnhuber (CSPR) at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK) in Germany. The primary objective of the retreat was to take stock of ESSP review recommendations and begin developing an ESSP strategy. The conclusions from the retreat were further discussed at the ESSP Scientific Committee meeting in Oxford, UK in June. One outcome of the SC meeting has been ESSP's request to ICSU to become an Interdisciplinary Body. ESSP is also approaching the International Social Science Council (ISSC) for co-sponsorship.

### Biodiversity

[DIVERSITAS](#), together with NASA, held a successful meeting in Potsdam, Germany in April to discuss a [GEO-BON](#) concept document and its implementation, in the context of the GEO Societal Benefit Area on Biodiversity. In mid-May, DIVERSITAS contributed to the joint side event of the IMoSEB consultation and MA Follow-up Global Strategy at CBD-COP9 to discuss plans for an [Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services](#) (IPBES).

### Geosphere-Biosphere

The fourth [International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme \(IGBP\) Congress](#) was held in Cape Town, South Africa in May. About 380 delegates from 65 countries attended the event and contributed ideas to the development of IGBP's scientific agenda for 2008–13. IGBP is focusing on how it can better contribute to sustainable solutions including mitigation, innovation and adaptation. The Congress resulted in the [Cape Town Declaration on Science for Environmental Sustainability](#), which outlined an enhanced plan of international collaboration to pursue science that will help achieve sustainable development.

The [ICSU-IGFA review of IGBP](#) will be completed in early 2009.

### Human Dimensions

The International Human Dimensions Programme (IHDP) held its second annual Science Policy Dialogue, '[Energy, Sustainability and Societal Change](#)', in June at the Donald Bren School of Environmental Science and Management of the University of California. The IHDP Scientific Committee will meet in New Delhi in October.

IHDP has announced that the seventh [International Science Conference on the Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change](#) (Open Meeting), originally scheduled for 15-19 October 2008, will now take place on 26–30 April 2009 in Bonn, Germany.

### Climate

The Joint Scientific Committee for the World Climate Research Programme (WCRP) met in Arcachon, France, 31 March–4 April, to discuss past progress and the future direction for the WCRP and its projects. The Committee concentrated discussions on intermediate (2008–13) and long term (post-2013) time horizons. The report from the meeting is [available online](#). [Professor A Busalacchi](#) has been appointed Chair of the JSC.

The world's leading climate researchers from within WCRP and IGBP met in May during the '[World Modelling Summit for Climate Prediction](#)' in Reading, UK, to discuss progress in state-of-the-art climate modelling capabilities. In an [editorial](#) on the Summit, which appeared in *Nature*, climate scientists called for greater investment in computer and research resources to drastically improve modelling capabilities.

The [ICSU-WMO-IOC-IGFA review of WCRP](#) will be completed in early 2009.

### UN Conference on Climate Change

The UN Conference on Climate Change (COP15), '[Climate Change: Global Risks, Challenges and Decisions](#)', will be held in Copenhagen, Denmark, 10-12 March 2009. Several sessions will be organized by the global environmental change programmes. The main aim of the conference is to provide a synthesis of existing and emerging scientific knowledge necessary in order to make intelligent societal decisions concerning the application of mitigation and adaptation strategies in response to climate change.

### International Group of Funding Agencies for Global Change Research

The Annual Meeting of the [International Group of Funding Agencies for Global Change Research](#) (IGFA) will be held in Mexico City, 1-3 October. IGFA is looking to refocus, in order to better address shifts in policy and priorities for global environmental change research and to align it to the interests and needs of its members.

### Ecosystem change and human well-being (formerly MA follow-up)

The report from the [ICSU-UNESCO-UNU ad hoc group](#) for ecosystem change and human well-being has been approved for publication and will be available soon. The ICSU General Assembly will be asked to approve a new 10-year project for research and monitoring priorities based on the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) – as recommended in the report.

### British Ecological Society Annual Lecture

The ICSU Executive Director, Thomas Rosswall, gave the Annual Lecture of the British Ecological Society on 3 September. In the lecture, '[Science and Society – the Role of Ecology](#)' he highlighted the changed context of interdisciplinarity, international research collaboration and the need for better linkage between global change and development research.

## Global Observations: IGOS Partnership Dissolved

The Integrated Global Observing Strategy Partnership (IGOS-P) held its final meeting at UNESCO in May. The Partners discussed the development of the IGOS-P Themes and their transition to the Group on Earth Observations (GEO). The Themes will play a strong role in the future of GEO, including strengthening the science and user interface,, as well as the definition of priorities, observational gaps and overlaps in the implementation of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). A symposium is planned for 2009 to recognize the many achievements of the IGOS-P Themes during the past ten years and to highlight the planned activities of the Themes as part of GEO.

## Global Observations: Interagency Coordination

The seventh session of the Interagency Coordination and Planning Committee for Earth Observations (ICPC) was held at UNESCO, Paris, in May. The Committee, which ICSU is an associate member of, agreed to develop one Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to replace the three MoUs which currently exist for the three observing systems – Global Climate Observing System, Global Ocean Observing System and Global Terrestrial Observing System. UNEP took over as Chair of the ICPC, from UNESCO, at the end of the session.

## Europe-Africa basic science conferences

The European Science Foundation has announced a new series of research conferences to promote excellence and collaboration between Europe and Africa. The conferences, which are co-sponsored by ICSU, will focus on basic science that is important for development in Africa, Europe and beyond. The [first conference](#) is scheduled to take place in South Africa, 4–9 April 2009 and will cover the basic mechanisms underlying infectious diseases.

## Grants Programme

Seven projects have each been awarded €30,000 from the ICSU Grants Programme 2008. The projects are collaborative scientific initiatives relevant to science and society and focus on the themes of the *ICSU Strategic Plan 2006–2011*. A [list of the successful projects](#) is available online.

Applications are invited for the 2009 ICSU Grants Programme. The Programme Statement and Schedule, as well as the Application Form are available in the [Member Zone](#) of the ICSU website. The deadline for receipt of applications is **1 December 2008**.

The ICSU Grants Programme is strictly reserved for ICSU Scientific Unions and Interdisciplinary Bodies.

## Engineering and Technological Sciences

The Executive Director

attended the Council meeting of the [International Council of Academies of Engineering and Technological Sciences](#) (CAETS) in the Hague, Netherlands, on 27 June. In the *ICSU Strategic Plan 2006–2011*, the importance of strengthening ICSU collaboration with technology and engineering was underlined. ICSU and CAETS are currently collaborating on the International Science Panel on Renewable Energy (ISPRES).

## ISSC World Social Science Forum

The ISSC [World Social Science Forum](#) will be held in Bergen, Norway, 10–12 May 2009. Session topics will include interdisciplinarity and how the social sciences are engaging with both the humanities and the natural sciences.

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## Science for Policy

### Sustainable Development

The 16th session of CSD, which took place at the United Nations headquarters in New York, 5–16 May 2008, focused on agriculture, land, rural development, and drought and desertification, with special attention paid to Africa—the regional focus of this CSD biennial cycle. 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 the World Federation of Engineering Organizations, submitted a [Discussion Paper](#) as formal input from the S&T Community.

The ICSU Delegation participated in the thematic and regional discussions on the topics covered by the review session. At the ministerial segment, which was attended by 60 ministers, ICSU made a formal [statement](#) on behalf of the S&T Community and participated in ministerial roundtables. ICSU co-organized two side events: 'Enhancing Agricultural Productivity: Meeting the Sustainability Challenge' with the Business and Industry Major Group, and 'Enhancing the Economic Value of Drylands through Agriculture' with the Farmers Major Group and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification.

The outcomes of the CSD-16 review session are available in the [Chair's Summary](#)

## Sharing Research Agendas on Knowledge Systems

ICSU is represented on the coordinating committee for the UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge, which is organising a global research seminar in Paris on 28–30 November 2008. The seminar, '[Sharing Research Agendas on Knowledge Systems](#)', will bring together researchers actively involved in studying research and knowledge systems in key fields such as higher education, science and technology, innovation, social sciences, health and agriculture.

## Follow-up of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment

ICSU, together with DIVERSITAS, continues to engage in follow-up activities of the [Millennium Ecosystem Assessment](#) (MA). UNEP has invited to an intergovernmental consultation, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 10-12 November, on the development of an Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES); ICSU and DIVERSITAS are members of the IPBES Advisory Group.

## World Climate Conference-3

The International Organizing Committee for the [World Climate Conference-3](#) (WCC-3) held its second meeting in Geneva earlier this month. The Committee agreed that the focus for the conference will be 'Climate predictions and information for decision making: managing risk on seasonal to multi-decadal scales'. The Conference will be held in Geneva, 31 August - 4 September 2009 and is being organized by the World Meteorological Organization, in cooperation with ICSU and other international organizations.

## World Conference on Science +10

ICSU will co-sponsor a [follow-up of the World Conference on Science](#) (which was organized by UNESCO and ICSU in 1999). The conference will take place in Budapest on 5–7 November 2009 and is being organized by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in collaboration with UNESCO, ICSU and the Academy of Sciences for the Developing World (TWAS).

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## Universality of Science

### Regional Office for Africa

The project proposal for 'Development of Energy Models and Scenarios for Africa' has been completed and the proposals for three more projects are near completion.

The [Regional Office](#) played a leading role in the African launch of the [International Year of Planet Earth](#) (IYPE) in Arusha, Tanzania in May. The Regional Office also took part in the fourth IGBP Congress in Cape Town, South Africa in May. The Office co-organized (in collaboration with the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, COMESA, and the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network, FANRPAN, and on behalf of the Global Environmental Change and Food Systems GECAFS) the working group session on 'Interactions Between Global Environmental Change, Food System Activities and Food Security in Africa'.

The Regional Office has been working closely with the Scientific Research Association of Mozambique (AICIMO) to prepare for the associated events of the 29th ICSU General Assembly.

### Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

The Science Planning Group on Sustainable Energy held its first and second meetings in Kuala Lumpur and drafted the science plan that the [Regional Office](#) will use to promote research on the science and application of sustainable energy in Asia and the Pacific.

The Regional Office co-hosted the First Meeting of the [Millennium Ecosystem Assessment](#) (MA) Sub-global Follow-up Programme as part of its work in its ecosystem priority area. This was the first time practitioners of the MA Sub-global Assessments (SGA) had been brought together since the completion of the MA. During the meeting the MA SGA network was re-established and future work planned. A Malaysian SGA scoping and design workshop was also held and the outline of a plan for a Malaysian SGA was prepared.

ROAP also hosted the framework setting dialogue between the United Nations University Institute for Advanced Study (UNU-IAS) and the Academy of Sciences for the Developing World (TWAS) as part of the [UNU-IAS initiative](#) on effective science governance in developing countries.

The Regional Office participated in the 8th Annual Conference of the Science Council of Asia (SCA) in Qingdao, China—an annual event attended by representatives from the 11 countries that are members of the SCA. A working visit was made to UNESCO Jakarta Office to discuss and prepare a framework for collaboration during the next few years. A list of six priority areas for collaboration was identified.

### Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean

The four Scientific Planning Groups of the [Regional Office](#) (Biodiversity, Sustainable Energy, Natural Hazards and Disasters and Mathematics Education) have presented draft reports to the Regional Committee and invited guests at the international symposium 'Scientific Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Vision for the Future' in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on 21 August. The final reports will be presented at a Regional Consultation in March 2009.

The Regional Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean held its fifth meeting in August, with the full participation of its members. The Committee discussed the upcoming ICSU General Assembly and the increased participation of the National Members from the region, as well as the involvement of the Committee in the second ICSU Strategic Plan, 2012–2017. The Committee was also briefed on the forthcoming Second Inter-American Meeting of Ministers of Science and Technology, under the framework of the Organization of American States, to be held in Mexico, 27–28 October 2008.

### Freedom and Responsibility

The Committee on Freedom and Responsibilities in the Conduct of Science (CFRS) held its fourth meeting in early June. Items for discussion included an analysis of [responses](#) from National Members to a questionnaire on research integrity and misconduct. Members had also provided valuable inputs on a draft document – Freedom Responsibility and the Universality of Science – and revisions to this were agreed. The resulting booklet will be available shortly. Proposals for increasing the involvement of ICSU Members and other organizations in the work of CFRS will be presented at the General Assembly in October. The [meeting report](#) is available online.

### Promoting the Integrity of Science

CFRS has released a [statement](#) highlighting the importance of establishing mechanisms for promoting research integrity and monitoring and addressing scientific misconduct. Both the National and Union Members of ICSU have an important role to play in keeping science honest.

### Publications and Research Assessment

CFRS has released a [statement](#) on publication practices and indices and the role of peer

review in research assessment. This issue was discussed in detail at the fourth meeting of CFRS as there is considerable concern that the emphasis on publication numbers and impact factors is having negative effects on the conduct and reporting of science.

In parallel to the CFRS consideration of these issues, the International Mathematical Union released an analytical [report on citation statistics](#), which concludes that: 'Numbers are not inherently superior to sound judgements'. This report is recommended reading for all those interested in this controversial area.

## Data and Information

The [final report](#) from the *ad hoc* Strategic Committee on Information and Data (SCID) is available online. The report was revised following consultation with Members, which resulted in some very valuable input. The key recommendations, including the establishment of a new ICSU World Data System, were endorsed by the Executive Board in May and will be considered by the General Assembly in October.

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## ICSU Governance and Policies

### Scientific Planning and Review

The Committee on Scientific Planning and Review (CSPR) held its 15th meeting in April. A half-day session was devoted to initial ideas for developing ICSU's second Strategic Plan (for 2012–2017). The [meeting report](#) is available online.

### 97th Meeting of the Executive Board

[Decisions](#) from the 97th meeting of the Executive Board are now available online.

### Officers' Meeting

[Decisions](#) from the Officers' Meeting in July are now available online.

### 29th General Assembly — Maputo, Mozambique

The first posting of documents for the 29th General Assembly, which includes the final list of nominations for Officers, is available in the [Member Zone](#) of the ICSU website. Online registration for the GA closes **10 October**.

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## ICSU National and Union Members

### New National Members

ICSU is pleased to welcome three [new National Members](#) from Africa – Burkina Faso, Namibia and Uganda.

### European National Members

The [European National Members](#) of ICSU held their sixth annual meeting in Helsinki in April in conjunction with the 100th Anniversary of the Finnish Academy of Arts and Letters. A special session was devoted to the role of humanities and social sciences in ICSU activities. The President of the International Social Science Council (ISSC) and the Executive Director of ICSU made two of the introductory presentations. The Executive Director also received the Medal of the Academy in recognition of his services to international science.

### Celebrations in Armenia

The Executive Director attended the celebration in Yerevan, Armenia, of the centennial of Academician Victor Ambartsumian, who served as ICSU President 1968–1972. The celebrations were organized by the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia and included meetings with both the President and Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia.

## ICSU representatives at meetings

A [list of ICSU representatives](#) attending the General Assemblies and Congresses of Scientific Unions and Interdisciplinary Bodies in 2008 is available online.

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## ICSU Secretariat

### New Executive Director

ICSU is pleased to announce the appointment of [Professor Deliang Chen](#) as new Executive Director. He will take up the appointment on 1 February 2009, following the retirement of Professor Thomas Rosswall.


### Staff departure

ICSU's long-serving Administration Officer, Elisabeth Merle, retired in June. ICSU staff were joined by those from CODATA, SCOPE and DIVERSITAS at a farewell party to celebrate Elisabeth's invaluable contribution to the organization. We wish her all the best in her retirement.

### Carbon offsetting for ICSU travel

The Executive Board has approved carbon offsetting for all ICSU travel. The decision follows on from a suggestion made by the young scientists attending the Global Scientific Challenges conference in Lindau, Germany last year.

Contact : [Jacinta Legg](#)

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