



ICSU Insight

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A word from the new Executive Director

ICSU has a long and successful history. In order to maintain its success, the organisation has undergone several major transformations, including in recent years when ICSU became a more strategic, forward-looking organisation. The first ever ICSU Strategic Plan, developed for 2006-2011, is one of the most important milestones in the history of ICSU.

We face many challenges in implementing this plan and, moreover, as we begin developing the Strategic Plan for 2012-2017. The active engagement, support and assistance from our Members, Interdisciplinary Bodies and partners, are needed if these visionary blueprints are to have an impact on science well beyond their six-year implementation timeframes. This need for engagement and participation is clearly illustrated by the new strategic activity on the visioning process for Earth system research (see below).

By looking ahead and focusing on the strategically important objectives, ICSU can strengthen international science for the benefit of society.

Deliang Chen

Planning and Coordinating Research

Earth System Visioning

ICSU has launched an online consultation to gather questions that will help direct the future of Earth system research. ICSU invites National and Unions Members, Interdisciplinary Bodies, partners, the broad scientific community and other interested stakeholders, to contribute by visiting <http://visioning.icsu.org>, until 15 August 2009.

The online consultation marks the beginning of the [Earth System Visioning](#) process, which aims to develop an integrated research approach to Earth system research and its coordination. The process responds to the decision by the ICSU General Assembly in 2008 on the need for an overall framework for global environmental research and its policy relevance.

Hazards and Disasters

The Scientific Committee of the new Interdisciplinary Body, [Integrated Research on Disaster Risk](#) (IRDR) held its first meeting in May during the first [World Social Science Forum](#). The committee, chaired by Gordon McBean, discussed joint projects with other organisations and programmes, and began setting up working groups that will shape IRDR in its initial phase. The United Nations [International Strategy for Disaster Reduction](#) (ISDR) has joined ICSU and the [International Social Science Council](#) (ISSC) as co-sponsor of IRDR.

The ISDR Scientific and Technical Committee has recommended to the United Nations Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction that governments support systematic programmes of scientific research, observations and capacity building at national, regional and international levels—underlining the importance of the new ICSU-ISSC-ISDR programme in providing a new and important framework for global collaboration.

The location of the IRDR International Programme Office will be decided following site visits in August to the China Association for Science and Technology (CAST) and the Academy of Sciences located in Taipei.

Ecosystem Change and Human Well-being

How do policies and practices affect resilience of the portfolio of ecosystem services that support human well-being and allow for adaptation to a changing environment? Following up on the publication of the report on [Ecosystem Change and Human Well-being](#) in December 2008, a Scientific Committee has been appointed to oversee the implementation of a new interdisciplinary programme. This [Programme on Ecosystem Change and Society](#) (PECS) is an ICSU Interdisciplinary Body jointly sponsored by UNESCO, and will complement the existing global environmental change programmes and Earth System Science Partnership.

International Polar Year

Two years on from the official launch of the [International Polar Year 2007–2008](#) (IPY), ICSU and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) hosted a celebration in Geneva, Switzerland, on 25 February 2009. ICSU President, Catherine Bréchnignac, conveyed ICSU's appreciation to the thousands of people who made the IPY a huge success. The event coincided with the release of [State of Polar Research](#), a report by the ICSU-WMO Joint Committee.

Attention now turns to ensuring and maximizing the legacy of IPY—particularly data and observations, education and outreach, and early career scientists. To support this, the International Programme Office in Cambridge, UK, and the terms of the Joint Committee have both been extended.

An [IPY Science Conference](#) will be held in Oslo, Norway, 8–12 June 2010.

Global Change Programmes

The [reviews](#) of the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (IGBP) and the World Climate Research Programme (WCRP) were endorsed by the ICSU Committee on Scientific Planning and Review in February and are now available. ICSU is following up on the recommendation to explore a more holistic framework for priority setting and research planning

across the global environmental change community (see [Earth System Visioning process](#) above).

Registration is open for the [Second DIVERSITAS Open Science Conference](#) (OSC2), which will be held in Cape Town, 13-16 October 2009. The conference, entitled 'Biodiversity and Society: Understanding Connections, Adapting to Change' is dedicated to biodiversity science and its connections to policy.

Dr Anantha Kumar Duraiappah has been selected as the new Executive Director of the International Human Dimensions Programme (IHDP).

Urban Health

The fourth meeting of the [Urban Health and Well-being Planning Group](#) took place in Paris in May. This included a meeting with local urban policy makers and researchers in a deprived suburb of the city, which gave insights into the complexity of factors affecting the interplay between housing conditions and individual and community health and well-being. The next meeting is planned for Beijing and Guangzhou in November and will include similar interactions with local urban stakeholders and academics.

Global Observations

ICSU participated in the meetings of the [Group on Earth Observations](#) (GEO) Science and Technology Committee (STC) and Architecture and Data Committee (ADC), in Italy, in May. The STC meeting focused on finalising the STC roadmap and planning for the two new GEO Tasks on Science and Technology. ICSU will contribute to the Task 'Promoting Awareness and Benefits of GEO in the Science and Technology Community'. The ADC welcomed plans for establishing close links between the new ICSU World Data System and GEO. The ICSU [Committee on Data for Science and Technology](#) (CODATA) continues to act as the principal partner of GEO in efforts to reach agreement on the GEO Data Sharing Principles and the respective Implementation Guidelines.

The Interagency Coordination and Planning Committee (ICPC) for Earth Observations appointed Riccardo Valentini (Italy) as chair of the Steering Committee for the Global Terrestrial Observing System (GTOS). The ICPC also reviewed the progress in reaching agreement on the single Memorandum of Understanding between the sponsoring organisations of the three global observing systems—climate (GCOS), oceans (GOOS) and terrestrial (GTOS).

Consultation on Future Strategic Priorities

At its February meeting, ICSU's Committee on Scientific Planning and Review (CSPR) considered the input from the initial consultation with Member on the development of ICSU's second Strategic Plan. It decided that a Foresight analysis would be an integral component of the strategic planning process. Details are now being worked out, and the major effort on this analysis, including further consultations with the ICSU membership and other stakeholders, will occur in 2010.

Grants Programme

Five projects have been awarded funding from the ICSU Grants Programme 2009. The projects are collaborative scientific initiatives that focus on the themes of the *ICSU Strategic Plan 2006–2011*. A [list of the funded projects](#) is available online.

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Science for Policy

Sustainable Development

The 17th session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-17)—which focused on policy options relating to agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification, and Africa—took place at the UN in New York, in May. ICSU and the World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO) provided the input for the Scientific and Technological Community Major Group in a [report](#) recommending priorities for action.

ICSU co-organised two side events: 'Farming First: Enhancing Sustainable Development through Agriculture' and a presentation of the new international research programme [Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security](#).

World Conference on Science

Ten years after the World Conference on Science, which was jointly organised by ICSU and UNESCO, the two organisations are again joining forces together with the Hungarian Academy of Sciences to sponsor the [World Science Forum 2009](#) in Budapest on 5–7 November 2009. Several hundred scientists and policy makers are expected to attend the conference, which has the theme 'Knowledge and Future'. The ICSU President and Vice-President will give plenary presentations on the past and future perspectives for science and the ICSU Regional Offices will also be represented.

World Climate Conference-3

The [World Climate Conference-3](#) (WCC-3) will take place in Geneva, Switzerland, 31 August–4 September. WCC-3 is an initiative of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and co-sponsored by ICSU. The conference will identify the essential elements of a global framework for meeting the future climate information needs of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and will lay the foundation for 'Better climate information for a better future'. Scientific experts from ICSU Interdisciplinary Bodies will be prominently involved in the conference programme. ICSU's President has been invited to address the WCC-3 High-level Segment.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is working on its fifth assessment report. ICSU, an observer to the IPCC, has asked that Interdisciplinary Bodies interested in taking part in the assessment be considered for observer status. The IPCC will prepare a report on 'Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation'. The report will review disaster risk reduction and management policy and practice, its effectiveness and costs. Scientists and stakeholders involved in the [Integrated Research on Disaster Risk](#) (IRDR) programme will be active in the preparation and assessment of the report.

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Universality of Science

Mid-term Review of the Regional Office for Africa

The Review Panel, chaired by Indira Nath (India), has been appointed and held its first meeting in Paris in June. [More information](#), including Terms of Reference and biographies of the panel members, is available on the ICSU website.

A [timetable](#) for the reviews of all three Regional Offices has been approved by ICSU's Committee on Scientific Planning and Review (CSPR) and is available online.

Regional Office for Africa

The 9th Meeting of the ICSU Regional Committee for Africa took place in Cameroon in March. Discussion items included implementation of the four Science Plans, the process for the Mid-term Review of the Regional Office for Africa (ROA), staffing and funding of the ROA secretariat, and the outline of the 2010–11 ROA Business Plan.

An international workshop of experts was held in February to develop project proposals for the fourth Science Plan, [Global Environmental Change \(including Climate Change Adaptation\) in sub-Saharan Africa](#). Four projects were proposed: impact of land degradation and biodiversity loss on human well-being; impact of climate change on rainfall and water resources; air pollution and health impact in urban areas; and monitoring strategies for adaptive management and governance in the coastal zones and large marine ecosystems. Task Teams have been charged with further developing these project proposals.

In May, ROA organised a workshop of the International Year of Planet Earth 2007–09 (IYPE) Science Implementation Team leaders and the African National Committee Chairs. The

workshop reviewed the activities of the IYPE in Africa and proposed a way forward after the IYPE officially ends at the end of 2009. Leaders of the ROA project Task Teams were invited to the workshop.

More news, including reports from the workshops, is available on the [Regional Office for Africa website](#).

Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

The 7th Meeting of the ICSU Regional Committee for Asia and the Pacific was held in Malaysia in April, where Bruce McKellar (Australia) was elected chair of the committee. The sustainable energy Science Plan was discussed and the final draft is now being prepared for publication. The committee also decided that the third Regional Consultation will take place in Penang, Malaysia, 13–14 October 2009.

The workshop, [Cities at Risk: Developing Adaptive Capacity for Climate Change in Asia's Coastal Megacities](#), was held in Bangkok in February. The workshop examined potential vulnerabilities and current coping mechanisms as well as means for improving networking and communication between urban planners/officials and the scientific community. A report with recommendations relating to future priorities is being produced. The workshop received funding from the ICSU Grants Programme with support from the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP).

The [Spring School on Fluid Mechanics and Geophysics of Environmental Hazards](#), which received funding from the ICSU Grants Programme, was held in Singapore in May. The School is promoted jointly by two of ICSU's Scientific Unions—the International Union of Theoretical and Applied Mechanics and the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics—and the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.

More news, including the ROAP Annual Report 2008, is available on the [ROAP website](#).

Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean

The [6th Meeting of the ICSU Regional Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean](#) took place in Mexico in March. This was followed by the second Regional Consultation where the final drafts of the four Science Plans were approved for publication (they will be available in English, Spanish and Portuguese) and the UNESCO First Regional Forum 'Science, Technology and Innovation Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean, Towards a New Social Contract for Science' at which preparations were made for the World Conference on Science +10 (WCS+10).

The Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC) held a multi-stakeholder [workshop on biodiversity and human well-being](#) to identify priorities for research, management and policy for Latin America and the Caribbean. The workshop is part of a [DIVERSITAS](#) project, supported by the Regional Office and funded by the ICSU Grants Programme.

ROLAC co-sponsored [Women for Science](#), a symposium to discuss gender mainstreaming in Science and Technology in the Americas. The symposium, held in April in Mexico, was promoted by the Mexican Academy of Sciences and the InterAmerican Network of Academies of Sciences, with the support of the InterAcademy Panel and CONACYT Mexico.

More news, including the ROLAC Annual Report 2008, is available on the [ROLAC website](#).

Science Education Review

The [Terms of Reference](#) for a strategic review of ICSU's role in Science Education have been agreed by the Committee on Scientific Planning and Review (CSPR). This is a topic of great interest to many ICSU Members, who have been solicited for nominations for an expert review panel. The challenge for the panel, which will be selected by CSPR in September, is to identify whether there is a specific niche for ICSU at the global level to complement the many science education initiatives that are already underway in various national and international settings.

Freedom and Responsibility

The sixth meeting of the Committee on Freedom and Responsibility in the conduct of Science

(CFRS) took place in May and considered the generous offers from a number of ICSU's National Members to co-sponsor workshops. A provisional timetable for these joint activities over the next three years is included in the [meeting report](#).

Several members are now rotating off the committee and the new [committee membership](#) was agreed by the Executive Board in April. Bengt Gustafsson (Sweden) will continue as Chairperson for a further three-year term.

Science and the Israel-Palestine conflict

CFRS has released a [statement](#) on 'Scientific Freedom and Responsibility and the Israel-Palestine Conflict'. This recognises that scientific freedoms have been compromised and/or threatened in both Israel and Palestine and emphasises the responsibility of the global scientific community to promote cooperation and understanding.

Visa problems and the United States

In February, a [letter](#) was sent to all ICSU Members regarding delays in the processing of visa applications for scientists entering the USA. This problem related particularly to some nationalities and was not only limited to the USA.

In June, Deliang Chen, the ICSU Executive Director, paid a visit to the US State Department, with the assistance of the National Academy of Sciences (ICSU's National Member in the US). The issue of visa difficulties was raised with David Donahue, Deputy Assistant Secretary at the Bureau of Consular Affairs. Many international scientists have experienced problems when applying for visas, particularly for attending conferences in the US. During the open discussion Mr Donahue outlined recent progress on this issue and encouraged ICSU to help identify specific cases so the problems can be redressed.

World Data System

The Scientific Committee for the [World Data System](#) (WDS), a new ICSU Interdisciplinary Body, has been appointed and will be chaired by Jean-Bernard Minster (USA). The Terms of Reference for the Scientific Committee (WDS-SC) were approved by the Executive Board in April following the recommendation of the ICSU Committee on Scientific Planning and Review (CSPR). The WDS-SC will hold its first meeting in October.

Information and Data

Members of the new *ad hoc* [Strategic Coordinating Committee for Information and Data](#) (SCCID) have been appointed. The committee, chaired by Ray Harris (UK), will hold its first meeting in October, back-to-back with the first WDS-SC meeting. More information, including the Terms of Reference, is available online.

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ICSU Governance and Policies

Scientific Planning and Review

[Decisions](#) from the 17th Meeting of the Committee on Scientific Planning and Review (CSPR) are now available.

100th Meeting of the Executive Board

[Decisions](#) from the 100th Meeting of the Executive Board are now available. These include an important decision to establish a new group to thoroughly consider the controversial issue of weighted voting.

30th ICSU General Assembly

The Executive Board agreed that the 30th ICSU General Assembly (to be held in Rome) will take place during the week of 26 September 2011.

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ICSU National and Union Members

ICSU Welcomes New Member

ICSU is pleased to welcome the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Albania as a new National Member. ICSU's Membership now comprises 117 National Members (representing 137 countries) and 30 Scientific Unions.

Unions Meeting

A meeting of representatives of all the ICSU Unions is held every 18 months, in association with a meeting of the Executive Board. The next Unions meeting will take place in Paris, 7–8 April 2010. The agenda will be organised by the four Union-affiliated members of the Executive Board in consultation with Union Members and with support from the secretariat.

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Partners

World Social Sciences Forum

The first [World Social Science Forum](#), entitled 'One Planet – Worlds Apart?', was convened by the International Social Sciences Council (ISSC) in Norway in May. During the Forum, ICSU Executive Director, Deliang Chen, chaired the plenary session 'Knowing Better and Doing Worse? What Social Science can provide for Policy'.

Funding Agencies

ICSU's Executive Director attended the Steering Committee meeting of the [International Group of Funding Agencies for Global Change Research](#) (IGFA) in London in May. The meeting focused on possible future structures and activities of IGFA and included discussion about ICSU's Earth System Visioning process.

The Executive Director also attended the Conference on Global Challenges for Environmental Research Funders, in the USA in June. Participants agreed on the need for an improved forum for dialogue between research funding agencies and ICSU, and for a coordinated process for early phase engagement on global environmental change research strategies and priorities. They noted that IGFA is currently refocusing its activities and that a new high level consultative and policy group is being established, to which ICSU will be invited to provide guidance.

ICSU Secretariat

Staff Changes

In April, the Secretariat welcomed [Clare Thirlway](#) as Personal Assistant to the Executive Director. Clare has a background in administration and human resources. Clare is currently on maternity leave and will rejoin the office in early 2010.

[Andrew Yang](#) joined the Secretariat on 7 July and will be responsible for moderating the online consultation for the [Earth System Visioning Process](#). He is on secondment as the initial part of a longer-term agreement between ICSU and the Academy of Sciences located in Taipei, represented by ICSU's President-Elect, Yuan Tseh Lee.

ICSU's Science Communications Officer, [Jacinta Legg](#), returned to the office at the end of June after five months maternity leave following the birth of her son.

Annual Report

The [ICSU Annual Report 2008](#) is now available.

Contact : [Jacinta Legg](#)

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