



*International Group of
Funding Agencies for
Global Change Research*

Newsletter

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Chair's Message

Welcome to 2009. Since the beginning of the year we have seen some extraordinary weather: extreme heat in Australia with continued drought in the south and floods in the north; severe droughts in Argentina and northern China; floods in South Africa; heavy snow in Europe and deadly windstorms in Spain and southern France. The IPCC has predicted 150 million environmental refugees by mid-century: the implications are disturbing. More scientific information and interdisciplinary analyses of global and regional conditions are essential for prediction, adaptation, economic development, safety and public security. Key elements include knowledge, skilled people, research infrastructure, international cooperation, political will—and stable funding, all of which are affected by the global recession. IGFA members are working to optimize co-operation and research support in these challenging times.

At its Annual Meeting in Mexico City, members agreed to a more regular exchange of information. This newsletter will help address that concern. Members are invited to send news items, dates of meetings, photos and other items for future editions.

Dawn Conway

IGFA Annual Meeting

Delegates met in Mexico City September 30–October 3, 2008 to discuss common interests in promoting and supporting global change research. They considered a refocusing of the partnership, to address shifts in policy and priorities for global environmental change research and to align IGFA activities more closely to members' interests and needs.

Delegates were welcomed by Adrián Fernández Bremauntz, President of the National Institute of Ecology, Secretariat of the Environment. Key business included exchanges of information on national and international activities, the future strategy and structure of IGFA, recent reviews of international Global Change programmes and discussion of new initiatives and emerging science. Funding of the international Global Change programs was the focus of a preliminary meeting.

Mexican and foreign experts presented scientific developments in special themed sessions dedicated to:

- 1) Climate Change and Health;
- 2) Food, Energy Security and Environment; and
- 3) The Water Cycle: Global Implications.

The directors of international Global Change programmes/partnerships and intergovernmental regional global change offices reported on their priorities and activities. Dr. Thomas Rosswall, Executive Director of ICSU,

briefed members on key ICSU matters, on new international initiatives and on recent and current evaluations of ESSP, IGBP, WCRP and SCOPE. Three of the reviews were conducted in partnership with IGFA.

Considerable time was devoted to IGFA's future. Members examined needs and priorities, trends, emerging scientific issues, financial resources and the importance of enhanced links between research and development agencies. They discussed structural needs: membership, governance and communications. Finally, they tentatively approved a new strategy and structure, which will be developed during 2009.



Delegates at the 2008 IGFA Annual Meeting in Mexico City

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Upcoming meetings

March 10–12, 2009 Copenhagen — Climate Change: Global Risks, Challenges and Decisions

The University of Copenhagen is hosting an international scientific congress on climate change in co-operation with nine other universities in the International Alliance of Research Universities. The aim is to synthesize existing and emerging scientific knowledge necessary to make intelligent societal decisions on mitigation and adaptation strategies in response to climate change. Findings of the congress will supplement the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and will be transmitted to policy makers at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP-15) in November–December 2009. For information: www.climatecongress.ku.dk

August 31–September 4, 2009 Geneva— World Climate Conference-3 (WWW-3)

The World Meteorological Organization is holding this event in co-operation with other UN agencies, national governments, and the private sector on the theme of “**climate prediction for decision making**.” The conference will focus on application of climate information and predictions to societal problems, to facilitate adaptation to climate variability and change in areas such as agriculture, water, health and sustainable development. For information: http://www.wmo.ch/pages/world_climate_conference/index_en.html

November 30–December 11, 2009 Copenhagen—UN Climate Change Conference

The Government of Denmark is hosting the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP-15) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. This is the last in a series of meetings at the government level before the expiry of the Kyoto Protocol in 2012. The objective is to produce a “Copenhagen Protocol” to encourage global co-operation on climate change and global warming. For more information: <http://www.cop15.dk/en>

Open Science Conferences

The seventh International Science Conference on the **International Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change Programme (IHDP)** will take place on 26–30 April 2009 in Bonn, Germany. The theme is “**Social Challenges of Global Change**.”

The Second **DIVERSITAS Open Science Conference on "Biodiversity and Society: understanding connections, adapting to change"** will be held from 13-16 October 2009, in Cape Town, South Africa.

And in other news...

Chinese-Danish Climate Change Conference in Beijing

Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen spoke at a bilateral Climate Change conference in Beijing on 23 October, 2008. He outlined five crucial elements for the new climate change agreement which is expected to emerge from the COP-15 conference in late 2009:

- ◆ a long-term vision for reducing global greenhouse gas emissions by 50 percent in 2050 from the 1990 baseline;
- ◆ that all industrialized countries commit to an ambitious medium term goal;
- ◆ that all countries encourage and support innovation and disseminate low carbon technology to sustain economic development while assuring reduction in emissions with global collaborative effort;
- ◆ that the new climate accord address the special needs of the most vulnerable developing countries who have contributed the least to global warming but suffer the consequences the hardest; and finally,
- ◆ that countries work to generate the necessary financing to sustain both dissemination of green technology and adaptation efforts.

"As host of COP15," he said, "our task is to balance these five elements in a global deal in Copenhagen." Source: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-10/24/content_10241772.htm

ESSP Review Released

The ICSU/IGFA Review of the ESSP was released in late 2008. The review panel, chaired by Professor Louise Fresco (The Netherlands), took a consultative and evidence-based approach to assist the development of the ESSP. ESSP is now in the process of developing a new strategic plan.



Global Observations: IGOS Partnership Dissolved

The Integrated Global Observing Strategy Partnership (IGOS-P) held its final meeting at UNESCO headquarters in May 2008. 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, 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 under GEO.

Asrar and Barrie manage new WMO Research Department

The reorganization of the World Meteorological Organization resulted in January 2008 in the creation of a new Research Department. Leadership of the department is shared by Ghassem Asrar, Director of the WCRP Joint Planning Staff and Len Barrie, Director of WMO's Atmospheric Research and Environment Branch. For information on how the Department fits into WMO's structure see http://www.wmo.ch/pages/about/sec/images/structure_big.gif.

Source: WCRP News e-zine No 9—March 2008 and No. 10 – June 2008

Appointments of Interest

- ◆ Deliang Chen succeeded Thomas Rosswall as Executive Director of the International Council for Science, February 1, 2009.
- ◆ Claire Bréchnignac, president of the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS), France, is president of ICSU for the period 2008–2011.
- ◆ Sybil Seitzinger took up her position as Director of the International Geosphere Biosphere Programme (September 2008). Earlier in 2008, Ghassem Asrar became Director of the Joint Planning Staff of the World Climate Research Programme (March 2008).

New CGIAR Challenge Programme on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security



The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) Challenge Programme "Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security" (Climate Change Challenge Programme, CCCP) is a major collaborative endeavour involving CGIAR, its partners and ESSP. It is aimed at overcoming the additional threats posed by a changing climate to achieving food security, enhancing livelihoods and improving envi-

ronmental management in the developing world. Main objectives are to:

- ◆ Overcome critical gaps in knowledge of how to enhance and manage the trade-offs between food security, livelihood and environmental goals in the face of a changing climate.
- ◆ Develop and evaluate options for adapting to a changing climate to inform agricultural development, food security policy and donor investment strategies.

- ◆ Assist farmers, policy makers, researchers and donors to continually monitor, assess and adjust their actions in response to a changing climate.

A steering committee and secretariat will be established and an international launch conference is anticipated in 2010. Professor Thomas Rosswall has been appointed Chair of the CGIAR Challenge Programme. For more information: <http://www.cgiar.org/>

Update on International Polar Year



International Polar Year runs from March 2007 to March 2009. It is an intensive scientific program focused on the Arctic and the Antarctic and is sponsored by the International Council for Science (ICSU) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). In IPY's waning months, attention has turned to its legacy of research, observations and interdisciplinary collaboration in the polar regions.

State of Polar Research, a report with preliminary findings of IPY will be made public at a ceremony at WMO headquarters in Geneva, on **25 February 2009**. The report provides new insights in polar knowledge.

Recent IPY meetings include a **December 3-5, 2008** workshop at WMO headquarters: **IPY Legacy Workshop on Sustaining Projects' Contributions to WMO Global Cryosphere Watch and GEOSS**. The workshop was co-sponsored by WMO, the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) and the World Climate Research Programme (WCRP), through its Climate and Cryosphere (CliC) project.

ICSU Approves new Programme on Disaster Risk

The International Council for Science (ICSU) has launched a major 10-year research programme to address gaps in the knowledge and methods needed to apply science to averting disasters and reducing risk. The programme **Integrated Research on Disaster Risk (IRDR)** was announced at the 29th ICSU General Assembly in Maputo, Mozambique, October 21-24, 2008.

Each year hundreds of thousands of people are killed and millions injured, displaced or have their livelihoods destroyed by natural disasters. The frequency of such disasters has increased from around 30/year in the 1950s to over 470/year since the beginning of this century. "*The Integrated Research on Disaster Risk programme will provide an enhanced capacity to address hazards and make better decisions to reduce their impacts,*" said Gordon McBean, Chair of the ICSU Planning Group for Hazards. "*In 10 years, as a result of this programme, we would like to see a reduction in loss of life, fewer people adversely impacted, and wiser investments and choices made by governments, the private sector and civil society.*"

The new programme, which builds on existing research activities, will address the impacts of disasters on all scales, from local to global. It will combine experience and expertise from around the world and provide an opportunity for collaboration between the natural and the social sciences.

For information:

http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2008-10/icfs-icf101608.php

Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks

The SAON report **Observing the Arctic** is now available on the web at: [http:// www.arcticobserving.org/](http://www.arcticobserving.org/)



The report is directed to organizations, agencies, governments, networks and programs involved in all aspects of Arctic observing. Its conclusions were developed during a series of workshops involving 350 Arctic researchers, representatives of inter-governmental, national and subnational government agencies, representatives of indigenous peoples organizations, and residents of the Arctic. SAON resulted from a request from Arctic Council ministers at a meeting in Russia in November 2006. A major recommendation from the SAON process is the establishment of a formal Arctic Observing Forum to facilitate international collaboration among government agencies, researchers, and northern residents.