

## **Response of the IGCP Scientific Board to proposed budget cuts to IGCP and the restructuring of the Division of Earth Sciences**

The International Geoscience Program (IGCP) Scientific Board was disappointed to learn of 1) a proposed cut to the budget of IGCP, and 2) the restructuring of the Division of Earth Sciences.

IGCP is a joint endeavor of UNESCO and IUGS (International Union of Geological Scientists) and operates in about 150 countries, involving several thousand scientists. It provides a multinational platform for Earth Scientists to collaborate on projects aimed at understanding the Earth, its Resources and their role in Society. IGCP's activities are in line with UNESCO's overall goals in terms of benefits to society, capacity-building and the involvement of geoscientists from developing countries. Successful IGCP projects have been implemented on: Medical Geology, Climate Change and its impact on Society, Environmental Catastrophes, Cultural Heritage, Biosphere Changes, Mineral Resources and Biodiversity in the Earth's past.

The Scientific Board of IGCP is particularly concerned that IGCP continues to maintain its current level of financial support from UNESCO for the following reasons.

1. Water is a priority focus for the activities of UNESCO. IGCP has therefore created a new focus on hydrogeology to build a bridge between the Earth and Water Sciences. Most of our water resources lie underground and their sustainable development and protection require an understanding of geology.
2. Mitigation of Geohazards requires fundamental understanding of geological processes – for example the occurrence of earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides, floods and volcanic eruptions are all controlled by geological processes. IGCP has projects specifically aimed at these processes.
3. Thousands of Earth Scientists around the world are involved in IGCP activities to meet the increased global demand for industrial and agricultural minerals, construction materials and energy resources, while sustaining the environment.
4. IGCP continues to be highly successful in knowledge transfer to, and capacity building in, developing countries. This has contributed to successful technology transfer to the developing world, resulting in training and innovation of the future scientists in these countries. For some developing countries IGCP is the only opportunity for its scientists to participate in international research programs in the Earth Sciences.
5. The status associated with the successful awarding of an IGCP project is a stamp of approval and enables the leveraging of significant additional funds from outside sources – of the order of a 10 - 50 fold increase. This results in an enhanced profile for UNESCO.
6. IGCP contributes significantly to the UN's millennium goals, and will be a significant contributor to the proposed Year of Planet Earth.

We are supportive of interdisciplinary cooperation. We note the merging of the Divisions of Earth Sciences and Ecology. However, we believe that the transfer of the Geohazards component from the Division of Earth Sciences to the Division of Basic and Engineering Sciences goes counter to this ideal, and it will not enhance the ability of UNESCO to provide leadership in hazard mitigation programs. This is because Earth Sciences provides the fundamental framework for understanding the mechanisms that control the occurrence of natural hazards such as earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides, and volcanic eruptions. Earth Sciences also provides the basis for prevention and alert systems for such hazards.

An enhanced IGCP will contribute to the overall aims of UNESCO with regard to international cooperation and societal development. The geosciences provide the basic framework for sustainable development on Planet Earth. All member countries of UNESCO will benefit from a strong IGCP. At the recent World Conference on Disaster Reduction held in Kobe, Japan, several senior officials from UNESCO, including the Director General made promising proclamations that UNESCO will be there to serve the global community in the wake of the terrible tragedy in the Indian Ocean. UNESCO will be best able to meet such obligations by ensuring a strong and active IGCP through the maintenance of its program budget and the retention of the Geohazards component within the restructured Division of Ecology and Earth Sciences.

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