

## ICSU INTERNATIONAL POLAR YEAR PLANNING GROUP

13 February 2004

### Update on the ICSU International Polar Year Planning Process

Dear Colleague,

The ICSU International Polar Year Planning Group (IPY-PG) is pleased to update the community on progress in the planning of an International Polar Year 2007-2008.

In response to our letter of September 2003:

- we have received over 140 ideas from the international science community, including individuals and teams from 22 nations, international science groups (e.g. SCAR, IASC), some of the ICSU Unions and their Affiliated organizations (e.g. International Union of Radio Science, International Permafrost Association), and intergovernmental organizations with polar interests (e.g. World Meteorological Organization).
- 14 nations have established National Committees or National Points of Contact and we are aware of at least a further 6 who are in the process of doing so.
- new ideas continue to arrive.

The IPY-PG is very pleased with this high degree of mobilization of the international science community, and thanks all who have contributed to date.

All submissions have been logged and retained for the future. An initial Summary accompanies this letter. **It would be helpful if those who have provided input would check their entry in the Summary AND confirm that we can make the details of their submission public.**

The science ideas submitted so far encompass the 3 major themes of Change, Exploration and Decoding Polar Processes. The ideas are geographically balanced with a roughly even split between the poles. Although we envision the IPY 2007-2008 as an international and interdisciplinary activity we have subdivided the proposals into disciplinary clusters to highlight some of the gaps. Some disciplinary interests were skewed towards one pole or the other and some disciplines are poorly represented. Specific gaps we have identified are studies of the humanities, social sciences, astronomy, and solid Earth studies, especially in the Arctic. Also, some nations are notable by their absence.

As a result of the high degree of support for an International Polar Year, and in response to a progress report and recommendation from the IPY-PG, the ICSU Executive Board at its 88<sup>th</sup> meeting decided:

To note the interim report from the IPY Planning Group; to further note the many expressions of interest in an IPY from the ICSU community and beyond;
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to establish an International Polar Year 2007-2008, subsequent to confirmation by the 28<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of ICSU;  
to charge the Planning Group with completing its work and submitting a report to the Executive Board by 1 October 2004;  
to recognize the importance of additional support for the IPY initiative and to charge the Planning Group with the establishment a secretariat as soon as possible and at least by 1 October 2004;  
to reiterate the Terms of Reference and guidance given to the Planning Group especially as regards to the broad scientific scope of the IPY; and  
to propose to WMO that the two organizations should jointly sponsor IPY 2007-2008 and appoint a Committee to plan and coordinate IPY activities.

Given these important advances, and the time pressure in order to achieve an IPY in 2007-2008, the immediate priority for the IPY Planning Group is to seek as a matter of urgency additional input from nations and bodies who have not yet responded, and to synthesize the ideas submitted and identify any remaining gaps. By late April, we aim to have developed a preliminary Outline Science Plan (OSP) for the IPY. This will articulate the overarching science questions to be addressed, integrate the ideas submitted into major clusters, and identify some of the initial proposed projects.

We aim to present the OSP at the Arctic Science Summit Week in Reykjavik, the European Geophysical Union in Nice, the American Geophysical Union in Montreal, the Fifth International Conference of Arctic Social Science in Alaska and the SCAR Open Science Conference in Bremen. We anticipate lively discussion and feedback.

In the meantime, we look forward to:

- additional nations establishing National IPY committees;
- receiving input from additional ICSU National Members
- receiving input from ICSU Scientific Unions, Interdisciplinary Bodies and additional relevant non-ICSU bodies;
- active and fruitful discussion with the international science community of the Outline Science Plan at the planned venues.

**Input from National IPY committees, ICSU National and Union Members, other scientific bodies and the broader science community will be most useful if it is received by March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2004** The IPY-PG welcomes suggestions for additional venues for presentation of the IPY concept and the Outline Science Plan.

Yours sincerely



C.G. Rapley (Chair) and R. Bell (Vice Chair)  
On behalf of the ICSU IPY Planning Group