

Frequently asked Questions on the International Year of Planet Earth (IYPE)

1. What is the International Year of Planet Earth?

The International Year of Planet Earth is an ambitious programme designed to foster outreach and research activities with the single purpose of raising worldwide public and political awareness of the vast (but often under-used) potential of Earth sciences for improving the quality of life and safeguarding the planet. The aim is encapsulated in the Year's subtitle 'Earth sciences for Society'. It will run for the three successive years 2007, 2008 and 2009, and aims to contribute to making this planet a better, safer, healthier and wealthier place for our children and grandchildren. This ambition was endorsed by the United Nations when it proclaimed the International Year of Planet Earth for 2008, the pivotal year of the 2007-2009 triennium.

2. Why is there an International Year of Planet Earth?

Natural disasters, like the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, testify to the Earth's incredible power. More effective use of geoscientific knowledge can save lives and protect property. Such knowledge also enables us to satisfy, in a sustainable manner, the growing need for Earth's resources by an expanding human population. Such knowledge is readily available in the practical experience and publications of some half a million Earth scientists around the world, a professional community that is ready and willing to contribute to a safer, healthier and more prosperous society if called upon by politicians and decision makers.

3. Who is behind the International Year of Planet Earth?

The International Year of Planet Earth was initiated in 2000 by the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS), a non-governmental organization. The IUGS was immediately joined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), an intergovernmental agency. Both organizations have enjoyed several decades of productive cooperation. The initiative has attracted 12 Founding Partners that actively support the initiative. These *Founding Partners* are:

- International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics (IUGG)
- International Geographical Union (IGU)
- International Lithosphere Programme (ILP)

- International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS)
- ISRIC - World Soil Information
- Geological Society of London
- Geological Survey of the Netherlands (TNO)
- Federation of International Geoengineering Societies (FIGS), a consortium of IAEG, ISRM and ISSMGE
- International Union for Quaternary Research (INQUA)
- American Geological Institute (AGI)
- American Association of Petroleum Geologists (AAPG)
- American Institute of Professional Geologists (AIPG)

The IYPE also enjoys the support of *26 Associated Partners*, including all major international geoscientific and other relevant organizations, and a growing group of *International Partners*, including:

- Geological Society of America
- Geological Survey of Spain (IGME)
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)
- EuroGeoSurveys
- Norwegian Geological Survey (NGU)
- European Geoscience Union (EGU)
- British Geological Survey (BGS)
- Geological Survey of Japan (AIST)

4. Why was the IYPE proclaimed by the United Nations?

Governments were approached through the United Nations in order to attract political support. In the first instance, the Permanent Delegation of Tanzania gained support for this initiative from many nations of the UNESCO Executive Board at its meeting in April 2005. This was followed by a unanimous vote in favour of the IYPE during UNESCO's General Conference held in Paris in October 2005. The United Republic of Tanzania again took

the lead among a core group of 82 nations in co-sponsoring a draft Resolution in the United Nations General Assembly. On 22nd December 2005, the UN General Assembly, with reference to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, adopted by consensus Resolution 60/192 proclaiming 2008 as the International Year of Planet Earth. This Resolution requests governments of all 191 UN Member States to report on progress and results with respect to promoting the use of geoscientific knowledge in their decision making.

5. How is the IYPE organized?

The International Year of Planet Earth is a not-for-profit and non-religious 501 (c) (3) Corporation, registered in the USA. It is composed of a Board, a Secretariat and three Advisory bodies.

The *Board* is responsible for all decision-making on strategic and legal matters, and instructs the Secretariat. All stakeholders are represented in the Board. These include the two Initiators (IUGS and UNESCO), each of the 12 Founding Partners, the Associate and International Partners (each group sharing one seat), the Chairs of the three activities (science, outreach and fund-raising), and the national committees by way of 8 Regional Representatives. Major donors and sponsors will be represented on the Board in accordance with the level of their contribution. The Board has a President and a Vice Chairperson. Together with the three Committee Chairs and the representatives of the Initiators, they are the Officers of the Board, who are responsible for regular decision-making, including the final approval of science and outreach project proposals.

The *Secretariat* is responsible for all of the Year's operational activities at the international level, including preparing and implementing the Board's decisions and instructions, maintaining contact with the advisory bodies and the national committees, promoting and representing the IYPE, producing promotional and documentation materials, maintaining the website, correspondence, book-keeping, budget preparation, keeping records of approved IYPE projects, actively contributing to and keeping records of fund-raising activities, public relations and press contacts, maintaining the IYPE Calendar, maintaining contacts with all stakeholders and with other science year initiatives, *et cetera*. The IYPE Secretariat is hosted by the Norwegian Geological Survey, based in Trondheim, Norway. The Secretariat has an Executive Director responsible for all of the Secretariat's operations. The

Executive Director acts as a non-voting Secretary of the Board and its Officers.

The Corporation has three *Advisory bodies*: the Senior Advisers, the Goodwill Ambassadors and the Patrons. They advise the Board and its Officers, the Secretariat and the national committees on all relevant issues.

The International Year of Planet Earth is also represented by national and regional committees. Forty-two such committees had been established by May 10, 2007. The national committees are linked to the international corporation through Memoranda of Understanding, signed by both parties.

6. Which nations are involved?

The 46 national and regional committees so far established are -

Albania	Australia	Austria	Argentina
Brazil	Bulgaria	Canada	Cyprus
Czech Republic	Denmark	Estonia	France
Germany	Georgia	Hungary	India
Iran	Iraq	Ireland	Italy
Japan	Korea	Lithuania	Malaysia
Mexico	Mongolia	Morocco	Mozambique
Namibia	Netherlands	New Zealand	Norway
Peru	Poland	Portugal	Romania
Slovak Republic	Spain	Sweden	Switzerland
Tanzania	Turkey	UK	USA
Yemen	E & SE Asia Region		

Several other nations, including Belgium, Cameroon, Chile, China, Cuba, Finland, Kenya, Nigeria, Philippines, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Vietnam and Ukraine, are well on the way to establishing such committees, while others are seriously considering doing so.

Regional IYPE Committees are developed in specific regions where these are more readily established than is the case for National Committees. One Regional IYPE Committee has been established in East and Southeast Asia, covering the 11 nations in which the geosciences are looked after by the Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia (CCOP).

National and Regional IYPE Committees are independent bodies linked to the international Corporation through Memoranda of Understanding.

7. How can I submit a proposal for a science project?

Ideas for science proposals should comply with a number of criteria before they are submitted to the International Secretariat through Expressions of Interest (EoIs) in the first instance. Applications must meet the funding requirements of the Board of the Corporation. In order to do so, project applications should -

- be of high quality and of substantial scientific significance
- be substantially achievable within a time-frame of three years
- be soundly based in the geosciences
- aim to address one or more of the key questions, as stated in each of the Science Theme brochures
- be truly international in scope and global in relevance
- be holistic in nature and socially relevant
- be conformable with the principles of sustainability
- (preferably) include scientists from the less developed countries for reasons of capacity-building
- have the potential for the development of outreach activities
- take advantage of the opportunities provided by the wide spectrum of the Earth sciences and the practical benefits of interdisciplinary co-operation
- have a clear set of objectives and deliverables
- build on existing money flows, avoiding overlap with current programmes
- be designed to make use of most modern technologies.

All Expressions of Interest (EoIs) should be submitted to the IYPE Secretariat in Trondheim whose staff will acknowledge receipt and will transfer the EoI to the Chair of the Science Programme Committee. The EoI will then be forwarded to the appropriate Science Implementation Team (SIT) leader for evaluation. SIT leaders will inform applicants of the success or failure of their EoIs. In the event of failure, SIT Leaders will notify applicants of the grounds for the decision. When EoIs comply with the IYPE criteria, the proposers will be invited by the SPC Chair to write a full proposal. It is important to note that approved proposals may be funded

only at seed money level, grants being made only if sufficient Corporation funds are available.

Full proposals should be sent to the IYPE Secretariat where they will be registered and filed, prior to their evaluation by the SITs according to the published criteria.

8. How can I submit a proposal for an outreach project?

Ideas for outreach proposals should comply with a number of criteria before they are submitted to the International Secretariat, initially as an Expression of Interest (EoI). Applications must meet the funding requirements of the Board. In order to do so, project applications should -

- be of high quality
- be substantially achievable within a time-frame of three years
- preferably address one or more of the key questions, as stated in each of the Science Theme brochures
- be truly international in scope and global in relevance
- be socially relevant, and conform with the principles of sustainability
- have the potential to link with the IYPE's science activities
- have a clear set of objectives and deliverables
- build on existing money flows

All Expressions of Interest (EoIs) should be submitted to the IYPE Secretariat in Trondheim. The Secretariat will acknowledge receipt of the EoI, and will then transfer it to the Vice-Chair of the Outreach Programme Committee (OPC). The OPC will evaluate the EoI and inform applicants of the success or failure of their outline proposals. In the event of failure, the OPC will set out for the applicant the grounds for the decision. Proposers of EoIs that comply with the IYPE criteria will be invited by the OPC Vice-Chair to submit a full proposal. It is important to note that approved proposals may be funded only at seed money level, grants being made only if sufficient Corporation funds are available.

Full proposals should be sent to the IYPE Secretariat, where they will be registered and filed. They will then be evaluated by the OPC according to the published criteria.

9. Where are International IYPE events listed?

International IYPE Events will be listed on the website/web portal. A list of events is currently under construction, together with the International

Calendar of events. For the time being, interested parties are referred to the ('new') flyer, as posted on the IYPE website.

10. Where can I find information about National IYPE events?

National IYPE events are listed at the entries for National Committees. Some selected events are also listed on the International Calendar. Entry to the national events is achieved by clicking on the respective flag on the IYPE home page [www.yearofplanetearth.org].

11. How does IYPE relate to other International Years?

Three other international science years, none of which has sought UN-Year status, will run concurrently with the IYPE. These are the International Polar Year (IPY), the International Heliophysical Year (IHY), and the Electronic Geophysical Year (eGY). Each of the four international years has its own unique characteristics in terms of target groups, ambitions, and parties involved, but they all share the view that System Earth is a key to the sustainable development of humankind. The four have agreed to maintain close communication and to cooperate with each other, coupling their science and outreach programmes wherever possible and appropriate. This spirit of cooperation is formally stated in the *Celimontana Declaration* (see the IYPE business plan at www.yearofplanetearth.org). The four initiatives will move forward together to generate greatly enhanced awareness of the relevance of the geosciences to everyday life and livelihood.

12. How can I become involved?

You may contribute by generating ideas for implementation of the IYPE projects or by actively supporting current ideas, on both national and international levels.

As an individual, you may wish to contact your International Year of Planet Earth National Committee. Contact can be made by way of the IYPE Secretariat. Should your country not yet have a National Committee, you may wish to help establish one. Alternatively, if you would like to support this initiative financially, please contact the Secretariat.

If you are a representative of the industrial sector or of a Foundation, you may wish to communicate your ideas about implementation and/or sponsoring certain elements of this initiative. Please note that industry and the nations of the world need many more scientists to find and sustainably

extract and process Earth materials, without which the advance of human society will be seriously impeded. A national Earth science event held in Germany in 2002 clearly demonstrated that initiatives of this kind can greatly stimulate the renewal of such expertise, thoroughly justifying investment in sustainable use of the Earth while, at the same time, securing its more fragile aspects for future generations. You may wish to support this initiative at the national or international level but, in all cases, please contact the Secretariat.

If you are a scientist, you may wish to submit research proposals on one or more of the 10 themes by completing an Expression of Interest (EoI) form. You may also wish to contribute by linking existing or forthcoming (applied) scientific research programmes to those of the Year. In either case, please contact the Secretariat.

If you are a representative of the media or of other sectors in the outreach industry, you are invited to share your ideas with the Outreach programme Committee through the Year's Secretariat.

If you are a government representative with suggestions or questions about fitting this initiative into new or current plans on sustainable development, mining, energy, science and technology, international cooperation, environment, land-use planning, or education, please contact the Secretariat.

13. How can I donate?

In order to implement the many ambitions, plans and substantive projects within the International year of Planet Earth, substantial funds are needed. If you would like to help the world's Earth scientists realize the goals and guarantee the output of this global initiative by providing financial donations to the IYPE, please contribute directly to the Year's bank account:

International Year of Planet Earth

UNITED BANK

Morgantown WV 26505, USA

Account number 007048-2518ABA

Routing number 051900395

All contributions of US\$200 or more will be gratefully received and will be acknowledged personally.

International Year of Planet Earth Secretariat: iype.secretariat@ngu.no