

## **INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF PLANET EARTH (2007-2009) (Earth Sciences for Society)**

The International Year of Planet Earth (IYPE) 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 IYPE for 2008, the pivotal year of the 2007-2009 triennium.

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.

The International Year of Planet Earth was initiated in 2000 by the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS), a non-governmental organization. The initiative was promptly 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, 26 Associated Partners, and a growing group of International Partners.

Governments were approached through the United Nations in order to attract political support. In late 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 192 UN Member States to report on progress and results with respect to promoting the use of geoscientific knowledge in their decision making.

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, based in Trondheim, Norway, and three Advisory bodies. The IYPE is also represented by national and regional committees. Forty-three such committees had been established by April 2007. The national committees are linked to the international corporation through Memoranda of Understanding, signed by both parties. Some 20 other nations are well on the way to establishing such committees, while others are seriously considering doing so.

The IYPE has two major lines of activities. The Science Programme consists of 10 science themes, all based on the interaction between Earth sciences and society. Experts are invited to submit research proposals for each of the following themes:

Groundwater - towards sustainable use  
Hazards - minimizing risk, maximizing awareness  
Earth & Health - building a safer environment  
Climate - the 'stone tape'  
Resource issues - towards sustainable use  
Megacities - going deeper, building safer  
Deep Earth - from crust to core  
Ocean - abyss of time  
Soil - Earth's living skin  
Earth & Life - the origins of diversity

The other line of activities deals with outreach, to present the benefits of the Earth sciences for a better world to the public through a wide range of activities, including exhibitions, excursions, education, festivities, stamps, coins, music performances, images, events launches, publications, TV and radio broadcasts, trucks, trains, and ships bearing the IYPE logo, ringtones, gadgets, etc. Also for the Outreach Programme, individuals, groups, companies etc. are invited to submit proposals. For details, please check [www.yearofplanetearth.org](http://www.yearofplanetearth.org). For further information, please contact the IYPE Secretariat: [iype.secretariat@ngu.no](mailto:iype.secretariat@ngu.no) .