

REPORT

International conference celebrating 75 years of the International Council of Science (ICSU): Global Scientific Challenges: Perspectives from Young Scientifics

Participant Name: Verónica Fuentes

Place of Work: Argentinean Antarctic Institute. Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Sponsor: Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR).

To begin with, I would like to thank the SCAR for having nominated me to participate in this conference and for having provided the required economic resources that made my attendance possible. I should also say that for the last two years, the SCAR has been closely related to my professional training and has expanded my future possibilities to work on the scientific field in many ways. I was very lucky to win a SCAR scholarship 2006-2006 to carry out a research project on an area that would have been impossible to survey without such aid.

When I received an email containing information on this ICSU conference I found the idea of attending a scientific discussion that was different to the others I had participated in really appealing. This experience would not involve scientists working on one topic or one particular area of knowledge but young scientists from different disciplines and countries gathering to express their ideas, fears, doubts, hopes and points of view on the role of science in today's world and in the future.

Today, once the meeting has finished, and having had the chance to be part of it, I want to say that the conference has completely lived up to my expectations.

One hundred and fifty young scientists coming from sixty-three different countries and belonging to twenty-nine different disciplines met from April 4 to April 6, 2007, in the city of Lindau, Germany. Also present were the ICSU Executive Board and the Conference Planning Group.

The first plenary session was chaired by the ICSU President, Goverdhan Mehta, who summarized, in a perfect and moving way, the new paradigms faced by technology and science these days. The most important points in his lecture, which, at the same time were the central themes of the different sessions, were: the cohabitation of science and society, the relevance of rejuvenating science, the imperative necessity of policy in an asymmetric world and the international dimension of science.

All these points must be taken into consideration for planning for science in the future. This is why it is important that we, the young scientists that will be managing science in the future, have the opportunity to meet and express our ideas. For most of the participants, including myself, this conference has undoubtedly been an inspiring source for questions that will certainly help us be scientists who will be on a par with the times we have to live in. These times, the so-called "era of knowledge" due to the huge amount of knowledge produced and accumulated are also, paradoxically, times of unequal wealth distribution, hunger and poverty, climate change, decrease of diversity,

deforestation and pollution, terrorism and a lack of hope for most of human society. To change this represents a challenge for the generation of scientists attending this conference.

Given the large number of young scientists attending the conference, many of us did not have the chance to be speakers in the sessions. This fact, which could have disappointed me at first, was compensated for by the many chances I had to put forward my ideas during the conference and also during lunch, coffee breaks and dinners.

Throughout the conference, we also had the opportunity of expressing our disagreement with certain aspects of the current scientific system. In this sense, a great number of young participants, including me, consider that the number of publications in indexed journals should not be the most important factor, if not the only one, taken into consideration when evaluating our scientific background.

Regarding my working field, Antarctic research, specifically marine biology, I was able to exchange opinions with some young people working on similar areas. But most important of all is that I had the chance to spread my working experience in the Antarctic; besides, I got a very interesting input of ideas to develop. During the conference, the International Polar Year (IPY) was several times highlighted as a unique and invaluable opportunity to do science in a transdisciplinary way and among countries nowadays. In this sense, I am proud to participate in one of the IPY projects that gathered scientists from five countries and several disciplines in order to study the impact the melting of the glaciers has on the aquatic ecosystem to the west of the Antarctic Peninsula.

Finally, I profoundly hope that the future brings more conferences like this one and that the SCAR, as well as many other institutions, will be able to continue providing young scientists from all over the world with the chance to meet and share their ideas to help increase the **HSI**: the **H**uman **S**ensitivity **I**ndex for every scientist, as Goverdhan Mehta mentioned during the conference.

The complete conference program and most of the lectures and video recordings is available on the ICSU web site:

http://www.icsu.org/10_icsu75/75ANNIV_Young.html.

Cost of my participation in the conference and use of the funds provided by the SCAR

Round trip plane ticket Argentina-Germany: USD 1,300 + 36 USD Buenos Aires Airport taxes

Train tickets: EUR 95

Hotel, registration fee, *Offsetting of the conference CO₂ Emissions* and food: EUR 650

