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The Sixth Continent Initiative: Capacity Building in Antarctic Research during IPY 2007-2008

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“The Sixth Continent Initiative – Capacity Building in Antarctic Scientific Research” (6CI) is an approved International Polar Year (IPY) proposal supported by SCAR, the International Polar Foundation (IPF), a public utility foundation, with its head office in Brussels, Belgium, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), with its headquarters in Nairobi, and the International Antarctic Institute (IAI), based in Hobart. The aim of 6CI is to widen the exposure of researchers from non-traditionally polar countries to the culture of international scientific cooperation in Antarctica, and its relevance to the global community. The project aims to create a network of interested parties consisting of research institutions, funding agencies, logistics providers, international organisations, and NGOs to help support the development of polar science competences in non-traditionally polar countries.

Two of the SCAR Fellowships will be allocated for this purpose. Awards will be up to US\$10,000, providing, as needed, an economy class round trip airfare and a modest subsistence allowance for the fellowship period. The Fellow’s home institute will bear all expenses incurred in his or her own nation (domestic travel, visa costs, etc.), and the host institute will waive any bench fees that they might normally charge trainees.

Fieldwork in Antarctica in bases or on research vessels will be an integral part of the programme, followed by research in an appropriate institute in another SCAR member country. Researchers from SCAR member countries will be eligible and accorded priority, especially from those countries that do not have Antarctic research stations (e.g. Bulgaria, Pakistan, Ecuador, Malaysia, Portugal). Researchers from countries that have expressed an interest in joining SCAR (such as Greece and Romania) will also be eligible. In addition, outstanding candidates from non-SCAR member countries will be considered.

The three “Gateway” stations (Scott Base (New Zealand), Rey Jorge (Chile), and Sanae IV (South Africa)) will be directly involved in the initiative. In addition, the German station *Neumayer*, the Japanese station *Syowa*, and the Belgian *Princess Elisabeth* station in the Sor Rondane Mountains have also expressed an interest in hosting a visiting scientist. Berths on research vessels, such as the *Polarstern*, will also be available. (*Note: The Belgian base is on target for completion in the 2007-8 season so should be ready for occupancy in the 2008-9 season.*)

The programme will be managed by a consortium comprising the IPF, SCAR, UNEP and IAI. Researchers will be selected on the basis of a research project proposal submitted to the selection committee, following the standard SCAR Fellowship procedure.

IAI partner institutes will be requested to host the selected fellows, with attention being paid to locating the institute where the type of research being proposed is best accommodated.

National operators who have committed themselves to providing logistical support will coordinate with the host institutes to organise travel to and from the Antarctic.

The results of the research projects will be made available to the wider scientific community and the public, using a dedicated web site for communicating on IPY and project activities, as well as through an Earth Watch film to be financed by the UNEP and co-produced by the declarants.

The awards are limited to scientists younger than 35 on the day of the deadline for applications.

SCAR national Committees are encouraged to assist in finding suitable candidates.

Proposals must be made on a form obtainable from the SCAR Secretariat, which should be submitted electronically to the SCAR Secretariat (info@scar.org) by **15 May 2007**.

Topics for support should make a contribution to the objectives of one or more of the five Scientific Research Programmes endorsed by SCAR (for details see <http://www.scar.org/researchgroups/>).

Standard proposals are judged by a review panel comprising: two members of the SCAR Executive; the Chief Officers of the three Standing Scientific Groups or their Alternates; and the Executive Director. The Panel evaluates proposals on the basis of the scientific excellence of the proposed research. They give weight also to such factors as: its importance and timeliness; its achievability within the time frame allotted; the extent to which links have already been established with the proposed host institution; the extent to which it will strengthen the scientific capacity of nations with smaller or less well-developed Antarctic research programmes; and to its 'fit' with SCAR's place in science and with SCAR's scientific directions.

6CI proposals are evaluated rigorously in the same way, with additional input from the sponsors (IFP, UNEP and IAI).

At the end of each Fellowship each candidate is requested to provide a report to be posted on the SCAR web site.