SCAR and IASC links 2008-2009

1. Actions Under The Letter of Agreement

The SCAR and IASC Letter of Agreement was signed in 2006. SCAR and IASC agreed to combine their efforts in selected fields and activities (to be decided by mutual agreement) so as to raise the level of impact of both organizations in terms of making scientific advances and of advising policy makers (for example of the likelihood and likely effects of climate change), as well as to avoid duplication.

To facilitate the process, SCAR and IASC agreed:

(i) to invite each other to attend the meetings of their major bodies (SCAR Delegates’ Meeting and IASC Council). Steve Bigras (for IASC) attended the SCAR Delegates’ meeting in St Petersburg (July 2008), and Colin Summerhayes (for SCAR) attended the IASC Council meeting at ASSW in March 2009. Chuck Kennicutt also attended ASSW, but not the Council mtg. Volker Rachold (IASC) was invited to attend the EXCOM meeting in Punta Arenas but cannot do so except by ‘phone. The SCAR and IASC Bipolar Action Group (BipAG), formed in January 2008 to advise their respective management bodies on further possible linkages, and on how to develop and manage the IPY Legacy, met in St Petersburg on July 8, 2008 (see 2, below) and will meet again, in Oslo, on October 15-16, 2009.

(ii) to encourage appropriate linkages between the relevant existing SCAR and IASC scientific projects. Volker Rachold made a teleconference presentation on IASC to the SCAR Cross-Linkages meeting in Modena (March 2009). SCAR and IASC now co-sponsor the biennial High Latitude Climate meetings. ACE is connected to the IASC APEX paleoclimate project. SCAR and IASC co-sponsored the ISMASS ice sheet modelling workshop in St Petersburg (July 2008), and co-sponsor its follow up ice sheet modelling summer school (Portland Oregon, August 2009) with funds from ICSU.

(iii) to encourage their scientific communities to develop joint bipolar projects and approaches in appropriate fields. Since July 2008 SCAR and IASC now both co-sponsor with WCRP the Climate and Cryosphere programme (CliC). In July 2008 they also co-signed a Letter of Agreement with the new International Association of Cryospheric Sciences (IACS) and a Memorandum of Understanding with the Association of Polar Early Career Scientists (APECS). In March 2009 they co-signed a Letter of Agreement with the International Permafrost Association. IASC continues developing a Sustained Arctic Observing Network (SAON), and SCAR is learning from this to develop a Pan-Antarctic Observing System (PAntOS). SAON and PaAntOS together provide an observing system legacy for the IPY.

(iv) to work together in arranging workshops, conferences, and reports on topics of mutual scientific interest. SCAR and IASC jointly sponsored the Open Science Conference in St Petersburg, Russia (8-11 July 2008). They are also working together to co-sponsor the 2nd IPY science conference
(Oslo, June 2010). Both are represented on the IPY Joint Committee, which continues in being until summer 2010. Both are also represented in the twice-yearly meetings of the Heads of Arctic and Antarctic IPY Secretariats (HAIS). The IASC Executive Officer visited the SCAR EO in June 2009.

(v) to exchange ideas on best practices in data and information management. SCAR is advising IASC on the development of approaches to data and information management (via copy of the SCAR DIM Strategy).

(vi) to exchange newsletters and advertise each other’s newsletters and web sites on their own web sites. IASC and SCAR advertise each other on their respective web pages, and exchange newsletters.

(vii) to develop combined approaches to communicating with the wider community on the significance of polar research to the solution of societal issues, including their respective experience in giving advice to the AC and ATCM. SCAR and IASC keep each other informed of developments in respectively the Antarctic Treaty and the Arctic Council.

2. Progress with the Joint IASC/SCAR Bipolar Action Group (BipAG)

BipAG was created for 2 years in January 2008. Members include

Nick Owens (UK - oceanographer)
Bryan Storey (NZ - geologist)
Wayne Pollard (Canada - permafrost and geomorphology)
Heinz Miller (Germany - glaciology)
Fridtjof Mehlum (Norway - terrestrial biology)
Huigen Yang (China - upper atmosphere physics)
Elena Andreeva (Russia - social sciences)
Sue Moore (USA - marine mammals)
Chris Rapley (SCAR EXCOM rep)
V Rachold (IASC Sec)
C Summerhayes (SCAR rep)

BipAG has two main terms of reference:-

(1) to advise the SCAR and IASC Executive Committees on the development of instruments such as workshops, programs and networks to address bipolar issues (i.e. the first priority is to see how and where we could work, more closely together).

(2) to advise the SCAR and IASC Executive Committees on the development of mechanisms to nurture the IPY 2007/2008 legacy, with a special focus on the roles of IASC and SCAR.

2.1 IPY Legacy Developments

SCAR and IASC are positioning themselves as the existing polar coordination structures, to take a prominent role in ensuring the IPY legacy.

IASC and SCAR are already co-sponsoring the development of early career scientists through APECS (Association of Polar Early Career Scientists), an offshoot of the IPY.
They are also both developing polar observing systems (e.g. SOOC and iAOOS) that are intended to make complementary contributions in the post-IPY era.

SCAR and IASC also have an interest in developing systems for better management of data and information (though IASC has not yet made up its mind how to approach this topic). ICSU is developing a new approach to data and information management – the Polar Information Commons, to which Kim Finney has been elected as a SCAR member.

SCAR and IASC have a common interest in having a higher profile within ICSU’s global programmes (ESSP and IGBP), though this is not a problem with WCRP. We are currently being asked to provide our views to an ICSU consultation.

SCAR and IASC also have an interest in obtaining a higher profile at ICSU General Assemblies, where recently polar matters have only been considered under the heading IPY, which itself will disappear when the ICSU-WMO IPY Joint Committee comes to an end (summer 2010).

There is strong political support for building the IPY legacy – e.g. see the Ministerial Declaration from Washington DC, of April 6, along with relevant statements from Arctic Council and ATCM Resolutions.

As well as having run the first IPY conference (St Petersburg, July 2008), and being co-sponsors (though not primary organisers) of the second IPY conference (Oslo, June 2010), SCAR and IASC will also co-sponsors (but not organise) the 3rd and final IPY conference (Canada, 2012).

After the end of the IPY conferences there will be scope to consider holding another joint SCAR-IASC Open Science Conference in 2014 provided it is located in the northern hemisphere.

To ensure greater linkage with the climate community, BipAG recommended that SCAR and IASC seek representation as observers at IPCC. This has proved complex, but SCAR has obtained permission from ICSU to attend IPCC meetings as part of the ICSU delegation. In this same context, SCAR is seeking representation as an observer at the next UNFCCC meeting, and if this is obtained, will then re-approach IPCC to see if the same can be obtained there. IASC is waiting to see how successful we are.

2.2 BipAG meetings and future

BipAG met in St Petersburg and reported to the SCAR Delegates meeting in Moscow in July 2008.

BipAG will next meet in conjunction with the HAIS (IPY) group (Oslo, October 2009), with the object of preparing a report for the SCAR Delegates meeting in 2010.

In 2010 SCAR and IASC will have to consider whether or not to continue BipAG, and in what form.