

# **International Geographical Union--Union Geographique Internationale**

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**TO:** Chairs of IGU National Committees  
**RE:** IGU and the International Year of Planet Earth

**6 September 2006**

At its meeting in Brisbane June 27-July 1, 2006, the IGU Executive Committee asked me to design a strategy for IGU's contributions to the UN International Year of Planet Earth. This initiative by the International Union of Geological Sciences and UNESCO seeks to highlight the importance of the geosciences for the welfare of society. While 2008 is the official UN "Year", activities are planned for the entire triennium 2007-2009 ([www.yearofplanetearth.org](http://www.yearofplanetearth.org)). IGU is a founding partner in this endeavour and geographers have been actively involved in the choice and conceptual framing of the ten themes which constitute the Year's scientific and outreach agenda. Brochures are now available at the IYPE website ([www.esfs.org](http://www.esfs.org)) and printed versions from the IUGS Secretariat, Geological Survey of Norway, N-7491 Trondheim, Norway. Contributions are invited from scientists worldwide, and national IYPE committees have been constituted in at least 20 countries. Given the short time between now and the start-up of activities in January 2007, this is not a matter of new research projects, it is one of harvesting the fruits of previously completed work.

## **Strategy for IGU contributions**

The IGU Regional Conference in Brisbane afforded an excellent occasion to discuss this with colleagues who have already participated in those ICSU Geo-Unions collaborative projects which have actually laid the foundations for IYPE. Before leaving Brisbane, individuals had generously volunteered to assume leadership roles on six of the IYPE themes; since then two others have responded positively. Given the experience and expertise of these leaders, I propose that we begin with these eight themes, still seeking leaders for the other two:

Groundwater	Anthony Jones ( <a href="mailto:jaj@aber.ac.uk">jaj@aber.ac.uk</a> )
Climate	Annick Douguedroit ( <a href="mailto:annickd@up.univ-aix.fr">annickd@up.univ-aix.fr</a> )
Earth and Health	Mark Rosenberg ( <a href="mailto:rosenber@post.queensu.ca">rosenber@post.queensu.ca</a> )
Deep Earth	Irasema Alcantara Ayala ( <a href="mailto:irasema@igg.unam.mx">irasema@igg.unam.mx</a> )
Megacities	Frauke Kraas ( <a href="mailto:f.kraas@uni-koeln.de">f.kraas@uni-koeln.de</a> )
Resources	Yukio Himiyama ( <a href="mailto:himiyama@asa.hokkyodai.ac.jp">himiyama@asa.hokkyodai.ac.jp</a> )
Hazards	Susan Cutter ( <a href="mailto:scutter@sc.edu">scutter@sc.edu</a> )
Soil	Marek Degorski ( <a href="mailto:m.degorski@twarda.pan.pl">m.degorski@twarda.pan.pl</a> )

Theme leaders will promote international collaboration and information exchange among colleagues who engage on the respective themes. They will assume responsibility for the coordination and presentation of results during the triennium, and most especially at the XXXI IGC in Tunis (August 2008). Each one has now outlined a specific agenda for his/her particular theme in the form of a brief letter. I attach these here, trusting that you could bring these to the

## **International Geographical Union Executive Committee, 2004-2008**

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attention of geographers in your country, and especially to those who may be serving on specific IYPE National Committees. While direct correspondence will be possible with each of these leaders, IGU is also designing a central web page where all “scientific” and “outreach” IGU-IYPE activities could be browsed ([www.homeofgeography.org](http://www.homeofgeography.org)).

The IYPE is an interdisciplinary initiative, its central themes are quite familiar to geographers. Colleagues have found that sometimes our contributions may be underestimated or ignored. Lessons learned during previous International Years (e.g., Mountains, Water), however, as well as experiences during the ICSU Geo-Unions collaborative effort show that face-to-face dialogue can elicit the strengths of each discipline involved. Geographers can self-confidently claim strengths in several respects: integrating insights from both physical and human dimensions of environmental experience; examining the interface between scientific research and policy; place-based case studies; and cross-cultural comparative analyses of human activities and the bio-physical environment. At the Brisbane conference there was evidence of at least two really positive examples of geography's potential contributions to IYPE. At the Opening Session, Katherine Gibson afforded dramatic illustrations of “hopeful geographies” - grounded evidence of community economies and sustainable livelihoods in the island Pacific. Among the potential fruits of IYPE's “scientific” agenda perhaps one could gather similar evidence of things that work, livelihood practices that are environmentally sustainable in various parts of the world. The second impressive event at Brisbane was the Geography Olympiad where teams from 23 different countries participated in a highly ambitious programme. A more appropriate kind of IYPE “outreach” is scarcely imaginable

## **Proposed Time Table:**

### *1. Preparatory steps*

30 August 2006:	First circular to National Committee Chairs
30 September 2006:	Initial responses to theme leaders; IGU website in place
15 October 15 2006:	Preliminary outline of the theme agenda by leaders
11-16 November 2006:	Review of IYPE strategy at IGU-EC meeting

*2. Co-ordinated activities:* Time tables to be established by theme leaders, based on inputs

*3. Events/symposia/demonstrations:* Local, national or regional events may be organized by IYPE national committees. IGU is exploring prospects for the following three shared occasions:

September/October 2007:	Festival International de Geographie Saint-Die
January 2008:	A “launch” event at Home of Geography, Rome
August 2008:	XXXI IGC Tunis

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Please let me know (even by E-mail ) if you have received this letter. It will be sent electronically - the preferred mode for future correspondence - in a few days. I would therefore also appreciate a confirmation of the currently correct E-mail address at which you could be reached. I do look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Anne Buttimer

Attachments: Addresses of theme leaders, invitations for IGU-IYPE contributions on Groundwater, Climate, Earth and Health, Deep Earth, Megacities, Resources, Soils, Hazards.

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