

IHDP UPDATE

Magazine of the International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change

March 2008 · Issue 1

ISSN 1727-155X

The IHDP Strategic Plan 2007-2015

The road to...

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Guest Editorial

The Earth System Science Partnership: Societal Needs and Responsive Science

Rik Leemans

The Earth System Science Partnership (www.essp.org) integrates the insights from the international global environmental change research programmes – IHDP, DIVERSITAS, IGBP, and WCRP. Although the past leadership of the chairs and directors was successful, it was decided that a more formal governance structure was needed. The resulting Scientific Committee, which I'm pleased to chair, met in October to discuss the ongoing projects on Carbon, Water, Food, and Health, and other activities, including START and the Monsoon Asia Integrated Regional Study (MAIRS). The Health Project's science plan was also adopted by the IHDP and the Project is now co-sponsored by IHDP and its partner programmes, DIVERSITAS, IGBP, and WCRP. A preliminary ESSP vision emerged at this meeting: All new initiatives should involve a strong interaction with the end-users in society.

The ESSP-projects are already doing this actively. The Global Carbon Project, for example, just published an update on trends in accelerating CO₂ emissions, increasing carbon intensity (amount of C needed per unit GDP), and the decreasing strengths of natural sinks over the last few years. Their conclusions have consequences for climate policies. If these trends continue, mitigation efforts must be stepped up to limit climate change. These GCP results provide a timely update to IPCC's fourth assessment report, which was published last spring.

All other ESSP projects and the whole ESSP want to strengthen the links with international conventions, assessments, and research organizations. ESSP will strengthen the application of scientific understanding from all global environmental change programmes in such policy and assessment processes. ESSP can, through START, also help building capacity in developing countries to contribute to regional needs and assessments. ESSP will also develop a more coordinated communications platform of the latest scientific environmental change insights

I am really pleased that several of those elements are also stressed in IHDP's strategic plan. This means that many fruitful interactions and synergies between IHDP and ESSP will continue to develop and emerge in the coming years. Together, we will not only further develop cutting edge science, but also digest and apply it for society.

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