



EUROPEAN
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Symposium Statement

European Commission Symposium on “EC Global Change Research: International Partnership”

6-7 May 2004, Academy Palace of Sciences and Arts, Brussels

This conference discussed results to date and examined ways to reinforce the cooperation between European and global initiatives on Earth System Science.

Understanding the Earth System (e.g. ecosystems, climate change) is crucial to achieving environmental sustainability. Improved knowledge on global change processes and interactions with human activities is required to implement policy objectives on human welfare and safety, protection of environment and economic development. Considerable progress has already been made through European Union research on Global Change including ecosystems, in collaboration with International Programmes.

Opening speeches were given by Research Commissioner Philippe Busquin, by the Secretary-General, Mr. M. Jarraud, of WMO (World Meteorological Organization), by Dr. R.K. Pachauri, Chairman of IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) and by Prof. G. Brasseur as representative of the Earth System Science Partnership (ESSP)¹.

Mr Valette, on behalf of Mr. Mitsos, Director-General for Research at the European Commission, also addressed the participants on the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) initiative. Mr. Mitsos with other government representatives from USA, Japan and South Africa co-chairs GEO.

The participants appreciated the statement of Commissioner Busquin on the importance of supporting Global Change research. Leading European Scientists gave speeches and participated in discussions. This included a presentation given by Prof. Paul Crutzen, Nobel Laureate for Chemistry on "Atmospheric Chemistry in the Anthropocene".

1. The participants endorsed the need to sustain the leadership role of Europe in several Earth System Science areas, which has been developed inter alia through the EC supported research. It was recognised that the results of this research are and would continue to be of great value to the ESSP Programmes and to entities such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).
2. Close interaction between EC and the ESSP is important in order to provide significant contributions to global change research, and to issues such as climate and

¹ ESSP comprises the international global change research programmes, DIVERSITAS, the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (IGBP), the International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change (IHDP), and the World Climate Research Programme (WCRP).

ecosystems change and their impacts, and so contribute to the development of a European Research Area (ERA). Existing mechanisms at the EC level provide a good basis to implement such cooperation. The ERA-NET instrument could be useful in this respect.

3. The involvement and partnership of developing countries in EC research programmes on Earth System research are urgently needed.
4. The participants recognised that Global Change research should not stand in isolation. Exploitation of the outcome of Global Change / Earth System science for the other drivers (environmental technology, sustainability impact assessment, sustainable management) of the EU research strategy should be ensured. The research agenda of Global Change / Earth System science should take into account the needs of these drivers.
5. There is a need for follow-up of research activities on the Global Change component of Sustainable Development, for which EU Heads of State made strong commitments at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 in Johannesburg.
6. The field of “Global Change/Earth System science”, both in its European and in its global dimension provides a fruitful testing ground to combine the different “axes” of FP7: e.g. thematic research efforts, ERA-Net, infrastructures and mobility enhancing mechanisms as well as technological platforms. Also links to the new “European Research Council” function for basic research are relevant in this context. Thus the “Global Change area” may be a test case for such as crosscutting approach involving a set of both “current” and “new” axes. This process could be discussed in appropriate fora as soon as the “new perspectives for research” are approved by the European Commission.
7. The participants agreed that a mechanism should be established for ongoing consultation among the EC, the ESF and the ESSP on the integration of global change research in Europe and its linkage to the international programmes. Particular attention should be paid to implementation of concrete projects and activities that demonstrate such integration and linkage.
8. The participants proposed that the EC-ESSP partnership demonstrate its potential by achieving an early success in the development of joint activities or infrastructure. One suggestion is that the EC establish a coordination node to support and integrate European research in Earth System modelling, in which Europe currently has the lead globally. The node could also contribute to the ESSP efforts on Earth System modelling
9. The participants welcomed European leadership in the GEO process and noted the substantial contributions of the ESSP to the process, both directly and via the Integrated Global Observing Strategy Partnership (IGOS-P). The participants suggested that a parallel process is required to support and enhance the global research effort in Earth System science as a necessary complement to the process toward establishing a Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). They further suggested that the EC could take the lead in this process by hosting an Earth System Science Summit, similar to the Earth Observation Summit.