



Senior Arctic Officials
Permanent Participants
Working Groups
Observers

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Planning is underway for an International Polar Year (IPY) in 2007/8 to celebrate, respectively, the 125th, 75th, and 50th anniversaries of the first two International Polar Years (IPYs) and the International Geophysical Year (IGY). More than an anniversary, the IPY is expected to intensify and enhance polar research, engage the next generation of scientists in polar exploration and illustrate to the public the crucial role that the polar regions play in Earth's ecosystem.

The concept of the IPY has been endorsed and advanced by a broad range of polar and global research groups, including the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and the XXVI Session of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting. Many governments, including members of the Arctic Council, have set up national committees to co-ordinate input into the IPY process. In February of this year, structure was given to many of the ideas that had emerged with the establishment of the International Science Council's (ICSU) Planning Group. According to the ICSU's Terms of Reference, it should stimulate and encourage debate among a wide range of interested parties on the objectives and possible contents of the IPY (see attachments 1 and 2).

The ICSU Executive Board has asked the Planning Group to provide a draft plan for the IPY 2007/08 for the Board's meeting in February 2004 and to develop a final plan for presentation to the ICSU 28th General Assembly in 2005 (see attachment 3). Although preparations for the IPY 2007/8 are still in the early stages, it is shaping up to become an international campaign of coordinated polar observations and analysis, bipolar in focus, multidisciplinary in scope, and international in participation.

The Planning Group intends to create an open process and encourages broad input from the international community. It has begun to describe the desired goals for IPY 2007/8, which include addressing compelling science issues through multi-national programmes and enabling scientific programmes, which would not otherwise

go forward. A key objective will be the exploitation of opportunities afforded by new information technologies to achieve unprecedented participation in the IPY science. Three major themes have been identified; exploration of new frontiers, understanding changes at the poles and decoding polar processes (see attachment 4).

Item 14 of the draft agenda for the SAO meeting on 23-24 October concerns Arctic Council priorities for the IPY. I would encourage you to present your own ideas as to how the Arctic Council could become involved in the process of developing the concept of the IPY, what aspects of the Council's work should be drawn on in that respect, as well as what to expect from the exercise.

Any further suggestions you might have before the meeting are, of course, welcome.

Yours sincerely,



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