

# Grand Challenges: Future Earth

Future Earth was launched in June 2012 at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). It builds on more than two decades of successful international science collaboration in the WCRP, IGBP, Diversitas and IHDP programmes.

Future Earth is sponsored by the Science and Technology Alliance for Global Sustainability comprising the International Council for Science (ICSU), the International Social Science Council (ISSC), the Belmont Forum of funding agencies, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), the United Nations University (UNU), and the World Meteorological Organization as an observer.

The need for a co-ordinated scientific and societal response to global environmental change was highlighted at the 2012 Planet under Pressure conference. The conference declaration called for a new approach to research that is more integrative, international and solutions-oriented, reaches across existing research programmes and disciplines, and has input from governments, civil society, local knowledge, research funders and the private sector. This was echoed in the Rio+20 declaration and the United Nations secretary general's Global Sustainability Panel report, with the latter calling for a major global scientific initiative to strengthen the interface between policy and science. Future Earth is a response to these statements and calls.

The interim Secretariat of Future Earth is based at the International Council for Science (ICSU) in Paris, France, and Frans Berkhout (Professor of Environment, Society and Climate in the Department of Geography, King's College London) is interim director. The Science Committee is chaired by Mark Stafford Smith (CSIRO's Climate Adaptation Flagship in Canberra, Australia) with co-chairs Belinda Reyers (chief scientist at Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in Stellenbosch, South Africa) and Melissa Leach (director elect and a professorial fellow of the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex, UK, and director of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)). This committee will ensure that Future Earth science is of the highest quality, and will make recommendations on new and existing projects as well as emerging priorities for research.

I am very sure that the geospatial community will contribute to this project from different perspectives. Follow Future Earth at the <http://www.futureearth.info/> or sign up for the blog: <http://www.futureearth.info/blog>.

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