

ICSU/UNESCO in support of
The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development 2012 (Rio+20)

Concept Paper for Regional Science and Technology Workshops to be jointly organized by ICSU and UNESCO Regional Offices

Four Regional Workshops (for Asia Pacific; Latin America and the Caribbean; Africa; and the Arab States) will be organised by ICSU and UNESCO in 2011. A fifth workshop, for Europe, will be organised by ICSU's European Members, in cooperation with UNESCO.

The aim of the ICSU/UNESCO Regional Workshops is to give natural scientists, social scientists and engineers from the different regions the opportunity to prepare joint positions and concerted input into the intergovernmental Rio+20 Regional Preparatory Meetings. These intergovernmental Regional Preparatory Meetings will be organized later in 2011 by the UN Regional Economic and Social Commissions (ESCAP, ECA, ECLAC, ESCWA and ECE).

Background to Rio+20

The UN General Assembly (GA), at its session on 23 December 2009, decided to organize, in 2012, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development “at the highest possible level, including Heads of State and Government or other representatives”, and in this regard accepted the offer of the Government of Brazil to host the Conference in Rio de Janeiro, the city which hosted the first Earth Summit in 1992 - hence Rio+20.

The respective GA resolution states that the objective of the Conference will be “**to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development, assessing the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development, and addressing new and emerging challenges**”. Moreover, the Conference’ agenda will also include two themes to be discussed and refined during the preparatory process: **a green economy, in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and the institutional framework for sustainable development.**

The GA further decided to establish an intergovernmental Preparatory Committee for the Conference within the framework of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). The first meeting of the Preparatory Committee was held at the UN in New York for three days in May 2010, immediately following the eighteenth session of CSD (New York, May 2010). There are nine Major Groups identified in Agenda 21 (Rio 1992) that participate regularly in the work of CSD. They will also participate in the work of the Preparatory Committee. These groups are: women; youth and children; indigenous people; non-governmental organizations; local authorities; workers and trade unions; business and industry; scientific and technological community; and farmers. ICSU has been formally invited to be co-organizing partner, together with the World

Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO), of the Scientific and Technological Community Major Group.

In order to enhance the bottom – up approach in the preparatory process, it was also decided that the five regional UN Economic and Social Commissions will organize intergovernmental Preparatory Meetings in their respective regions. The CSD rules of procedure for participation of Major Groups will apply to these Regional Meetings.

ICSU and UNESCO's Strategic Objectives in Rio+20

- To ensure that the best available science, including social science, is integrated into policy recommendations resulting from Rio+20.
- To ensure that relevant policies resulting from Rio+20 take account of the needs of international and national science, as strengthening science, technology and innovation will be essential for accelerating implementation of sustainable development.
- To incorporate specific regional concerns and priorities into the global agenda of Rio+20.
- To use Rio+20 as an opportunity to consolidate and strengthen regional and sub-regional policy frameworks for sustainable development.
- To use our involvement in Rio+20 to strengthen our role and activities in the strategic activity area: *science for policy and policy for science*.

Objectives of Regional Workshops

- To prepare agreed upon positions as a concerted input by the regional scientific and technological community into the intergovernmental Regional Preparatory Meetings.
- To organize a science – policy dialogue at the regional level prior to the Regional Preparatory Meetings.
- To organize a multi-stakeholder dialogue with other “Major Groups”, including business & industry.
- To identify showcases to be featured in Rio in 2012 to show the contributions of science to sustainable development.
- To identify speakers/ conveners for the Forum on Science for Sustainable Development, to be organized in Rio in 2012 as a major parallel event to the UNCS D.

Key Questions to be addressed at the Workshops

1. What are the priority issues for Rio+20, as seen by the scientific and technological community from the region, taking into account the UN GA outline of Rio+20 in 2012?
2. What are the needs of science and technology in the region, in order to be able to contribute best to sustainable development in the region and to international endeavours of sustainability science?
3. What are the major contributions from the sciences and engineering to sustainable development at local, national, and regional scales?
4. How can science and engineering contribute to a Green Economy, also taking into account the role of the private sector in science, engineering and technology?
5. What role can the different stakeholders and Major Groups play in enhancing regional science and technology for sustainable development, and what are their needs from science and technology?

Co-sponsors

ICSU and UNESCO will jointly take the initiative to organize the regional workshops, in cooperation with WFEO, ISSC and possibly other regional stakeholders.

Participants

There will be around 60 participants representing several categories of stakeholders, coming primarily from countries in the region:

- Natural scientists, social scientists and engineers, including a number of young scientists and engineers, with a good gender balance
- High-level policy makers/ government representatives
- Representatives of Major Groups
- Co-sponsors

ICSU and UNESCO will also involve regional scientists from their programmes (e.g. the global environmental change research programmes sponsored or co-sponsored by ICSU) in the workshops.

Dates and Location

Region	Date	Location
Asia Pacific	16 – 18 April 2011	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Africa	30 May – 1 June 2011	Pretoria, South Africa
LAC	3 – 5 August 2011	Mexico City, Mexico
Arab States	12 - 14 October 2011	Cairo, Egypt
Europe	12 – 14 October 2011	Helsinki, Finland