

The International Year of Planet Earth 2007 - 2009

Around the Indian Ocean, work is now in progress on installing tsunami warning systems – but only after 230,000 people died in the disaster of 26 December 2004. Earth scientists are concerned that their knowledge of the Earth, which could save many more lives and livelihoods from destruction, is under-used. How many more people must die needlessly before the world grasps the need to use our understanding of the Earth more effectively?



What is the International Year of Planet Earth?

The International Year of Planet Earth aims to ensure greater and more effective use by society of the knowledge accumulated by the world's 400,000 Earth scientists. The Year's ultimate goal of helping to build safer, healthier and wealthier societies around the globe is expressed in the Year's subtitle 'Earth science for Society'.

The International Year runs from January 2007 to December 2009, the central year of the triennium (2008) having been proclaimed by the UN General Assembly as the UN Year. The UN sees the Year as a contribution to their sustainable development targets as it promotes wise (sustainable) use of Earth materials and encourages better planning and management to reduce risks for the world's inhabitants.

Who is behind the International Year?

The International Year of Planet Earth is a joint initiative by UNESCO and the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS). Twelve Founding Partners, 26 Associate Partners and a growing number of International Partner organisations from all continents and representing all major geoscientific communities in the world, have embarked on this initiative. The Year also enjoys the full political support of 191 UN countries. By December 2006, National Committees on the Year of Planet Earth had been established in 31 countries around the world, and preparations are being made to launch similar Committees in 20 more.

In operation

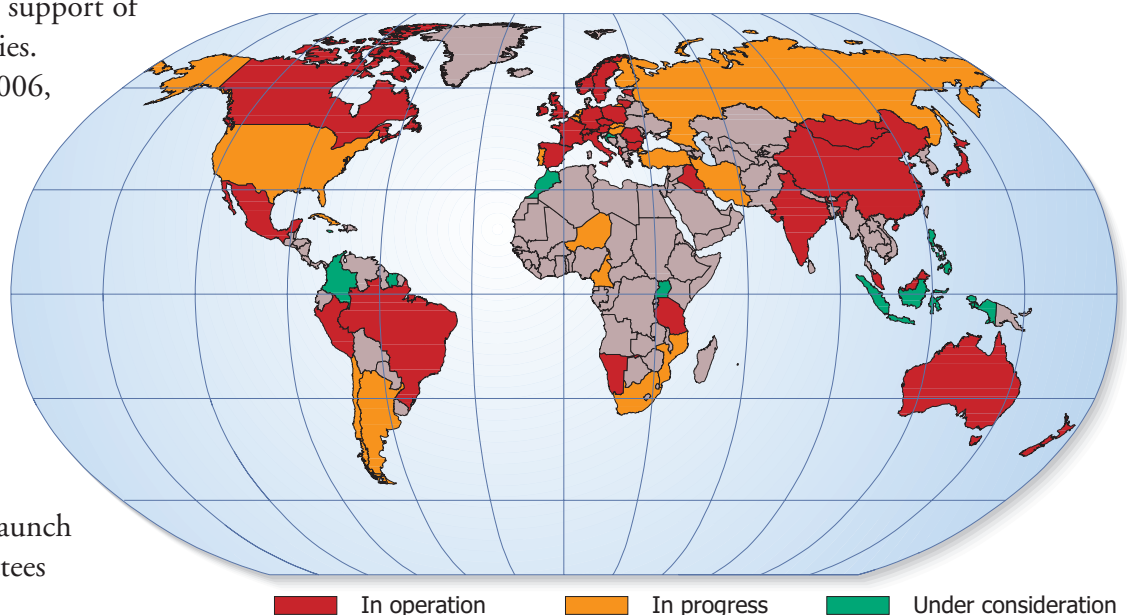
How does it work?

The main activities of the International Year of Planet Earth operate within its Science and Outreach programmes. Funding for projects in both programmes is sought from industry, Foundations and governments worldwide. Both programmes essentially operate in a response, or 'bottom-up' mode.

The Science Programme consists of 10 broad, societally relevant and multidisciplinary themes: health, climate, groundwater, ocean, soils, deep Earth, megacities, hazards, resources, and life. Brochures on each of these themes are available in hard copy, and can be downloaded from the Year's website. Scientists from all countries of the world are invited to submit Expressions of Interest (EoIs) dedicated to specific questions within each theme.

For example ...

Standards will be set with the implementation of 'Transparent Earth', an initiative that will add a third dimension to current public, digital mapping software packages. Special regional geoscientific maps will be produced in the framework of the Year, and 'Planet Earth' will dominate numerous (inter)national scientific congresses in 2007 - 2009. Study and research grants will be provided for many young geoscientists in developing countries.



The Greatest Geo-Show on Earth

The Year's Outreach Programme consists of a very large number of national and some major international activities. Some plans and outreach projects provided by the Year's National Committees in November 2006, include:

- Release of 4,567 bio-degradable balloons, each representing 1 My of Earth history, in the South of India and in London, UK in January 2007
- World Mining Ministers' Forum, March 2008, Toronto, Canada
- Roving Smithsonian World Soil Exhibition, starting in Washington, USA
- 'Geoscience for the Public' exhibitions in many countries
- New Earth Science Museum for Brazil
- Lecture tours and excursions organised throughout several European countries
- Geology & wine excursions in Australia
- DVD on sustainable mineral exploration
- TV documentary on Earth sciences
- Launch of International Consortium of Urban Geoscientists
- First steps towards an Institute of Earth Science for Underground Cities
- Special books, journals and articles with focus on 'Planet Earth' in many countries
- International Year of Planet Earth stamps
- New Journal on 'Geoheritage'
- Teaching courses for journalists and teachers
- New Geoparks will be opened in several countries
- Geotourism Conference to be held in Australia, 2008
- 3rd UNESCO Geoparks Conference will be held in Germany, 2008
- The famous Viennese New Year Concert in a geological Museum
- Eighteen-wagon 'Geo-Train' with exhibitions across India
- Geo-bus and -truck tours in various countries
- Trains and ships painted in the Year's logo colours
- Musical Symphony: Planet Earth
- Geo-Poetry books
- Planet Earth ringtones
- Geo-Art competitions in various countries



The UN Year (2008) will be formally opened at UNESCO's headquarters in Paris. This event will include a 'Top Conference' at which world leaders in politics, science and industry will share their views on geo-related societal problems and raise issues concerning their solution or mitigation. In addition, they will debate these issues with some 3000 youngsters from all around the world. The Paris 'Top Conference' will be a model for comparable Conferences of a more regional character to be held in most continents in 2008.

Other international events with a significant outreach component include a Conference on Indigenous geo-knowledge and geoscience, and a large variety of geoscientific congresses in 2007, 2008 and 2009, as well as the first Young Earth Scientists (YES) Congress.

How can YOU contribute and support?

The International Year of Planet Earth provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to highlight the urgent need for knowledge of the Earth that will help to make societies on our home planet safer, healthier and wealthier. You may contribute by generating ideas for implementation of these goals or by actively supporting current ideas, on both national and international levels.

As an individual, you may wish to contact your International Year of Planet Earth National Committee. Contact can be made by way of our Secretariat. In the event that no such Committee exists in your country, you may wish to help establish one. If you wish to support this initiative financially, please contact the Secretariat.

If you are a representative of the industrial sector or of a Foundation, you may wish to communicate your ideas about implementation and/or sponsoring certain elements of this initiative. Please note that industry and nations need many more scientists to find and sustainably extract and produce Earth materials, without which the advance of human society will be seriously impeded. A national Earth

science event held in Germany in 2002 clearly demonstrated that initiatives of this kind can greatly stimulate the renewal of such expertise, thoroughly justifying investment in sustainable use of the Earth while, at the same time, securing its more fragile aspects for future generations. You may wish to support this initiative at the national or international level but, in all cases, please contact the Secretariat.

If you are a scientist, you may wish to submit research proposals on one or more of the 10 themes by completing an Expression of Interest (EoI) form. You may also wish to contribute by linking existing or forthcoming (applied) scientific research programmes to those of the Year. In either case, please contact the Secretariat.

If you are a representative of the media or of other sectors in the outreach industry, you are invited to share your ideas with the Outreach programme Committee through the Year's Secretariat.

If you are a government representative with suggestions or questions about fitting this initiative into new or current plans on sustainable development, mining, energy, science and technology, international cooperation, environment, land-use planning, or education, please contact the Secretariat.

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