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**Building joint capacities in science and policy sectors for
environmental decision making**

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Building joint capacities in science and policy sectors for environmental decision making

Adaptation to and mitigation of global change calls for timely decision-making that takes into consideration multiple contexts of environment and society. To inform such decisions it is important to link knowledge from different disciplines and sectors: scientists need to link across disciplines, and policy actors across departmental and ministerial divisions. With this document, the IAI proposes to establish an interdisciplinary and intersectoral capacity building program for scientists and government departments involved in global environmental change issues.

The complex decision processes and impact analyses needed for adaptation to global change require a durable communication and integration between science and policy sectors. An evaluation of the IAI's first collaborative science program undertaken by SCOPE and published as volume 68 by Island Press (and also synthesized in SCOPE-UNESCO policy brief 3) provided guidance for such a capacity building program: (1) interdisciplinary science is needed to generate both environmental and societal knowledge to address complex problems; and (2) an early and lasting dialogue between actors in science and policy is critical for guiding both the science and policy processes.

Following the IAI's mandate and the external review's recommendation to enhance the integration of human and natural sciences, IAI science projects have now been designed to be interdisciplinary and particularly to include close cooperations between natural and social sciences. At the same time, capacity building efforts target the learning processes needed for interdisciplinary collaboration.

Similar to the disciplinary divisions in science, there are divisions between government departments. In the face of global change issues, governments are making efforts to bridge these divisions through the creation of global change or climate change offices that have mandates across departments and ministries. In many cases, these efforts towards interdisciplinary and intersectoral governance could be enhanced by appropriate capacity building.

Based on its mandate as an intergovernmental treaty organization with an active science program and a politically based member country representation, the IAI proposes to advance the involvement of natural and social scientists and of decision makers in joint capacity building. The program will enable scientists and decision makers to jointly develop mechanisms critical for addressing environmental challenges and opportunities. It will foster a co-evolution of interdisciplinary science and interministerial communication towards the decision-making needed for successful adaptation to global change. This initiative aims at a new frontier in the development of science towards integration into policy that is urgently needed under global change.

The program is designed to develop a cooperation and exchange between different sectors of society, and to develop mutual trust, which is critical to assuring that the outcomes are useful in the decision-making process. Since decision makers will be involved in the program from the beginning, they will have an opportunity to influence the development of interdisciplinary science and thereby assure that such science has a receptive "clients". Program activities will take the form of topical workshops in which themes mutually agreed upon by scientists and politicians can be explored in a setting of open discussion and mutual learning. First discussions with potential stakeholders have identified such topics as regional environmental management (e.g. the St. Lawrence - Great Lakes watershed, or the La Plata Basin) or the links between environmental stressors and human health.

Initial discussions have taken place between the IAI, UNESCO, and SCOPE to develop this program as a cooperation. At the UNFCCC SBSTA in early June 2008, scientists and governmental delegates together with the IAI and its sister network APN will discuss how

interdisciplinary science and cross-sector governmental communication may be further developed within the proposed program. The IAI directorate expects that additional guidance for this proposal will result from these discussions. The program and its potential implementation with UNESCO and SCOPE will be discussed further at the IAI EC and CoP meetings in June.