



IHDP Open Meeting 2009

7th International
Science Conference on the
Human Dimensions of
Global Environmental Change

26-30 April 2009
World Conference Center Bonn
UN Campus
Bonn, Germany

The Social
Challenges of
Global Change

IHDP Secretariat | Hermann-Ehlers-Str. 10 | D-53113 Bonn | P +49 (0)228 815 0600 | F +49 (0)228 815 0620
www.openmeeting2009.org | openmeeting@ihdp.unu.edu

Press Release

Bonn, 1 April 2009. – More than 1000 scientists and decision-makers from 77 countries are planning to take part of the 7th Open Meeting of the International Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change, “Social Challenges of Global Change”, which will take place at the World Conference Center in Bonn on 26-30 April, 2009. Several open events will take place in the afternoon, putting the general public face to face with the dilemmas of global environmental change.

With extremely geographically and professionally varied backgrounds, the mix of researchers presenting at the IHDP Open Meeting 2009 will undoubtedly assure a motivating and rewarding dialogue in this, the biggest UN conference in Germany. Of these scientists, 36 percent are woman and a remarkable 34 percent of all the participants come from developing countries.

The 7th Open Meeting’s presenters are affiliated with more than 380 universities and institutions. Many of them are among the world’s most respected institutions conducting and supporting research on the social aspects of global environmental change. The Research Institute for Humanity and Nature in Japan, Arizona State University in the United States and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam in the Netherlands will be among the universities with the strongest representation.

Media Table “Catastrophe Sells”

Besides the scientific sessions (see “Four Major Challenges”), several free events, open to the general public, will

take place at the conference starting at 6 PM every day. On Tuesday, 28 April, the public will be able to participate of the media round table “Catastrophe Sells”, about the media coverage of climate change news and extreme environmental events. Several top journalists, researchers, and decision makers will participate of the table, which will be moderated by Deutsche Welle journalist Irene Quaille. Other panelists will be Dr Walter Ammann, President of the Global Risk Forum in Davos, Dr Ortwin Renn - Director of DIALOGIK, Dr Richard Klein, from the Stockholm Resilience Center, Mr James Painter, BBC World, Mrs Ranjitha Balasubramanyam - Deutsche Welle and Mr Stefan Krug, Spokesperson, Greenpeace Germany.

Endangered Small Island Countries

The high level Panel “Science for the 21st Century” will deal with the role of science to address the social challenges of global change. It will take place on Monday, 27 April at the World Conference Center Bonn (WCCB). The WCCB will be also the venue for another high profile event which will be open to the public and the press: the panel level on the effects of Climate Change on the future small-island states, on Wednesday, 29 April. More information at www.openmeeting2009.org

The Open Meeting Participants

To provide a preview of the profile of the participants that will be attending the conference, IHDP has compiled sta-

tistics about their ages, countries of origins and institutional affiliation. Please find them in the attached Annex.

Four Major Social Challenges

Four major social challenges of global environmental change will be addressed by world top scientists, politicians and even businessmen during the conference:

1. How do we deal with demographic challenges?

The almost exponential increase of the world population in the last century is part and parcel of the global changes we are experiencing, but is generally hardly discussed as such. Yet the demographic explosion poses several major challenges. From an economic perspective (“Who will pay for increasingly expensive health care of growing societies and, in many parts of the world, aging population?”), to that of food security (“How many more people can we feed and at which level of food consumption?”), to that of urbanization (“How do we manage the growing number of cities with over 20 million inhabitants?”), etc. We urgently need to posit such difficult questions as “How real is the predicted reduction in population growth rate after the middle of this century?”.

2. How do we deal with limitations of resources and ecosystem services?

The relationship between society and its environment has thus far been the main emphasis of IHDP: resource depletion and replacement, reduction of consumption of energy, water and other resources, reduction of waste production, preservation of ecosystem services, etc. But we now need to include the core challenges to be overcome to avoid an environmental disaster of unequalled proportions. We need to ask such questions as: “Can we achieve sustainability through technological innovation, or do we need to make more profound changes?”, “How do we transform the economic basis of our society into a sustainable one?”, or “How do we promote a different cultural and social attitude to the environment in general?”

3. How do we establish social cohesion while increasing equity at various levels?

Finding creative ways to ensure a fair and equitable distri-

bution of the benefits and vulnerabilities associated with the social challenges of global change is pivotal. Some underlying principles of the world’s societies are based on a strong notion of equity, while others are based on economic competition or kinds of inequities.

4. How do we adapt institutions to address global change?

Such questions pose profound challenge to contemporary forms of governance. At some level, this challenge has been recognized in the effort to create indicators of sustainable development, quantitative measures that enable decision makers to factor in elements of sustainability into decisions that might otherwise have relied solely on economic criteria. But the challenge to governance goes deeper than just creating new indicators. New governance processes are required that can facilitate the inclusion of new kinds of information, new values, and new voices into decision-making. This, in return, requires new institutional settings and, prior to that, adaptability of current institutions. New kinds of arrangements must be made to rebalance the relationship between formal and informal institutions, consequently between citizens and experts, acknowledging that citizens hold valuable knowledge that is key to creating sustainable communities at all levels of society from the village to the globe.

Media Coverage and Accreditations

If you would like to participate of the conference, interview some of our keynote speakers and/or cover the presentations and special events, please contact Mrs Gabriela Litre at litre@ihdp.unu.edu.

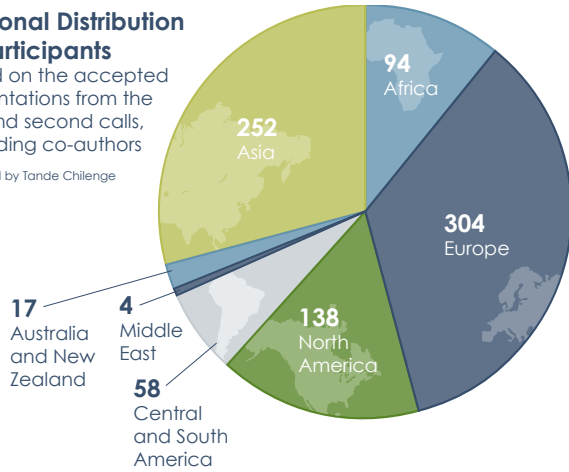
Gabriela Litre
Academic Officer and Communications Manager
United Nations University - IHDP
UN Campus, Hermann-Ehlers-Str. 10,
53113 Bonn, Germany
+49 (0)2288150630
litre@ihdp.unu.edu
www.openmeeting2009.org
www.ihdp.org

The Open Meeting 2009 in Numbers

Regional Distribution of Participants

Based on the accepted presentations from the first and second calls, excluding co-authors

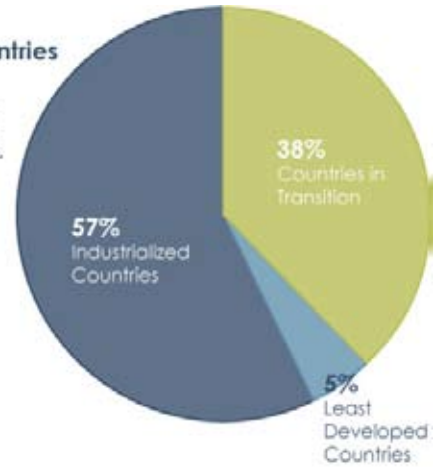
Prepared by Tande Chilenge



Developed and Developing Countries Represented

Based on accepted submissions from the first and second calls. Development status defined according to UN sources.

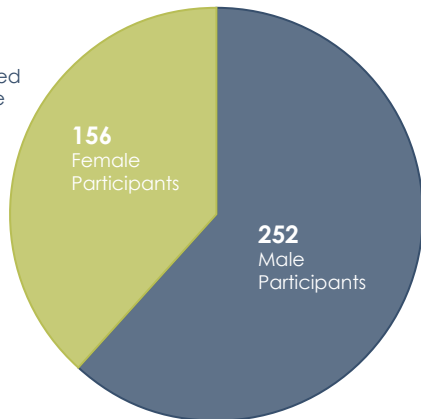
Prepared by Tande Chilenge



Gender Ratio of Participants

Based on the accepted presentations from the first and second calls, excluding co-authors

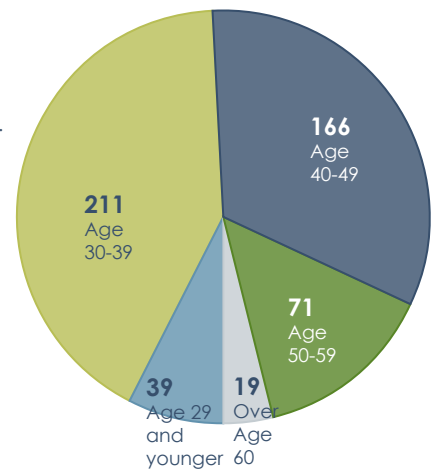
Prepared by Tande Chilenge



Age Groups of Participants

Based on accepted submissions from the first and second calls. (excluding 13% who did not provide their birthdate)

Prepared by Tande Chilenge



Most Represented Institutions

Based on the accepted presentations from the first and second calls.

