

IASC's COMMENTS & CONCERNS AND ITS ROLE IN IPY

Patrick J. Webber
President of the International Arctic Science Committee
webber@rnsu.edu

- The thoughts that I will share with you are some expressed by the IASC Executive Committee while others are my own. I will try and separate my own thoughts from those of the ExCom and I invite members of the ExCom, especially those more qualified than I on human and social issues, to add their voice.
- At the outset I do want to stress that IASC strongly supports IPY. IASC has demonstrated this by being one of the first groups to endorse the initial ICSU effort. We were also active in nominating members for the IPY Planning Group. IASC did not package proposals and topical suggestions for the initial ICSU compilation. We actively suggested direct submission by individual or groups of scientists. We have informed groups, especially policy groups like the Arctic Council, about the plans for IPY. We are also providing a small amount of financial support for planning and we look forward to promote means by which projects such as ACIA, ICARP II and ISAC will help IPY become a success. I should add that IASC is a significant shareholder in these.
- In this regard and to this last point we applaud a statement in the initial Outline Science Plan (iOSP), the 20th of April document from the ICSU IPY Planning Group. This statement is on page 4: It is: "Overall, the IPY seeks to foster new observations and research exploiting innovative, modern technology, whilst building on and enhancing polar initiatives already planned or underway. The underlined clause we feel may be especially important in the event of level budget funding.
- I should also say that IASC is pleased to note the partnership of WMO with ICSU in this endeavour.
- While we have not yet digested all of the iOSP we believe we perceive some flaws. It is in the spirit of cooperation that we share our thoughts on these.
- Let me begin by reading part of the IASC mission and you will see from whence cometh our concerns. ***IASC strives to integrate human, social and natural sciences that are concerned with the Arctic and to provide advice on Arctic issues.***
- Some of my colleagues commented that the document seems a little Antarctic-centric in places and also weak in life sciences. But I feel that these are minor concerns at this stage and I feel confident that this will change. Our principal concern is the weak handling of the human element in the iOSP. We know that the realm of human dimensions is one of the great contrasts between the two Polar Regions but hereby lays the challenge for bipolar studies
- We find that although there are many allusions throughout the iOSP to social and human issues they are usually rather cryptic and not sufficiently explicit. In our view, including the human equation in IPY is what will set it apart from previous IPY's and this may be the finest legacy of this IPY. After all humans are more dominant in the Earth System than they were 50 years ago and resources are scarcer and environmental issues more pressing.

- Let me expand on our concerns about the treatment of the human dimension.
 - First. In view of the need to find sponsors and especially to find government and public funds for IPY it is our view that if the socio-economic aspects of Polar Regions are ignored the IPY program will be in peril.
 - Second. We note a paradox in your treatment of Themes #1 and #2 of the IOSP.
 - (1) **To determine the present environmental status of the polar regions by quantifying their spatial and temporal variability.**
 - (2) **To quantify, and understand, past and present environmental and human change in the polar regions in order to improve predictions.**
 These are really the only two of the five themes where the human and social issues fit. The paradox is that Theme #1 doesn't relate quite as well to the human dimension as does Theme #2. Theme #2 has the word "human" in the statement and yet it is only the text under Theme #1 that alludes to human and social issues. They are ignored in the text under Theme #2.
- A final couple of comments. These concern how IASC can be a visible and functional partner in IPY.
- Do not forget that IASC does have a large base of specialists from 18 countries and we ready to help with the development and assessment of the Science Plan and its implementation.
- We also see a post-IPY role for IASC in collaboration with SCAR This is to assist with the synthesis of the findings and to foster, long-term, the heritage of IPY 2007-2009, data archiving, continued measurements, infra structure, observation platforms, and experiments etc.
- So with these comments I will stop and invite my IASC colleagues to add to mine if they wish. Comments on my comments are welcome.