

Press release: September 30, 2011

Rockström leads new initiative on environmental challenges

A newly established international research initiative will respond to the most compelling challenges facing our societies in this era of global environmental change.

The International Council for Science (ICSU), within a global alliance of partners, has established a major 10-year initiative which aims to effectively deliver solution-oriented research on global environmental change for sustainability. This new international collaboration effort, the Earth System Sustainability Initiative, will provide global coordination for science to respond to the most pressing societal and environmental challenges.

The growing sense of urgency is emphasized by Prof. Johan Rockström, Executive Director of the Stockholm Environment Institute and Stockholm Resilience Centre, and co-Chair of the team that is overseeing design and early implementation of the initiative: “The current pace and magnitude of human-induced global change is unprecedented, and is manifest in increasingly dangerous threats to societies and well-being. Climate change and biodiversity loss are only two examples of processes occurring at unsustainable rates.” Rockström adds: “Effective responses to all these threats to world development require a new way of doing research.”

With its integrated approach based on the active involvement of a broad range of stakeholders, the initiative will provide support for actions towards sustainability. Its launch will be next June, at the United Nations “Rio+20” conference, when policy- and decision-makers from across the world will explore new pathways to sustainable development.

Growing collaboration with other international organizations with similar processes and mandates has strengthened the basis of the initiative. It is now jointly managed by ICSU, the International Social Science Council (ISSC), the Belmont Forum of funding agencies, UNEP, UNESCO and UNU.

“For the first time on a global scale we can talk about effectively co-designed research on global environmental change, with researchers, donors and users working hand-in-hand to define goals and priorities upfront”, says Prof. Yuan T Lee, winner of the 1986 Nobel Prize in Chemistry and incoming ICSU President.

For more information on the Earth System Sustainability Initiative, see: <http://tinyurl.com/ESSI-ICSU>

For more information, please contact:

Ylva Rylander – Press and Communications Adviser, Stockholm Environment Institute
ylva.rylander@sei-international.org +46 73 150 3384

Sturle Hauge Simonsen – Press Adviser, Stockholm Resilience Centre
sturle.hauge.simonsen@stockholmresilience.su.se +46 8 674 7428

Howard Moore – Press Contact, International Council for Science (ICSU)
howard.moore@icsu.org +33 6 42 79 37 71

Stockholm Environment Institute is an independent international research institute. The Institute has established a reputation for rigorous and objective scientific analysis in the field of environment and development. SEI aims to bring about change for sustainable development by bridging science and policy.

www.sei-international.org

The Stockholm Resilience Centre is an international centre that advances transdisciplinary research for governance of social-ecological systems with a special emphasis on resilience - the ability to deal with change and continue to develop.

www.stockholmresilience.su.se