

International Year of Planet Earth in Japan

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The International Year of Planet Earth (IYPE) is an international project to increase awareness of the importance of Earth sciences in achieving sustainable development of society. The UN General Assembly has proclaimed the year 2008 to be the United Nations International Year of Planet Earth. The IYPE activities run the three years 2007-2009 to realize ambitious science and outreach programs.

The project was jointly initiated in 2001 by IUGS and UNESCO Earth Science Division. By mid 2003, IUGG and IGU joined this initiative as Founding Partners. Finally the project has attracted 12 Founding Partners and enjoys the support of 25 Associates.

The IYPE has two major lines of activity: an Outreach and a Science program. Outreach will play a very important role because of IYPE's prime aim to generate interest and greater awareness among the public, decision makers and politicians about the effective application of the knowledge and technology in the hands of the Earth science community. The science themes were determined on the basis of their relevance to our society; Groundwater, Hazards, Earth & Health, Climate, Resources, Megacities, Deep Earth, Ocean, Soils, and Earth & Life.

The Japan Provisional Committee for IYPE established in June 2004 under the Geological Research Coordination Committee of the Science Council of Japan (SCJ) to provide IYPE, but ceased its activity by Sept. 2005 because of the drastic reformation of SCJ. The Secretariat in the Geological Survey of Japan (GSJ) still has worked to keep contact with the management team of IYPE and to continue preparation of national programs.

After the reformation of SCJ, the National Committee (NC) for IYPE was re-built on July, 2006. The NC is a subsidiary of the International Corresponding Committee for the Committee of Earth Planetary Science, SCJ. The first meeting pointed Mr. Ohya as a chair. It also expressed requests that GSJ serves the secretariat for NC, and organizes a promotion body for IYPE in Japan, as well as running a website, www.gsj.jp/iype.

The NC and the Secretariat performed following activities by the end of 2006.

- Planet Earth logo on journals,
- Japanese brochures,
- Exposure at many sites.

IYPE Symposium 'International Year of Planet Earth 2007-2009' - Opening Ceremony in Japan - was held at the Koshiba-Hall, U of Tokyo in January, 2007.

The NC discussed the plan and maintained that outreach is the most important and that three or four themes could be focused on the science program.

For science program in Japan, the NC focuses three themes, Hazard, Resources, and Megacities which are the fields Japanese society needs for the sustainable development and Human Security. The implementation of science program will be carried out by universities and research institutions under arrangement of the Japan IYPE Implementation committee.

There are many co-operated events which were held or will be opened for public as outreach activities. Those events are listed on the website. The main of outreach activities in Japan are;

- promotion of Geoparks in Japan,
- development of earth science literacy

The NC would like to invite the Mass media to join IYPE and encourage to create new materials for education.

Contribution to GEOSS is another subject for IYPE in Japan. Today we have a huge volume of data collected by earth observation satellites and more effective use of the data is expected for mitigation of negative impacts of disasters.

The IYPE will also make potential contribution to the Millennium Development Goals and to the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development.

Note

Mr. Satoru Ohya, the former chair of the NC, was passed away as the result of a road accident. A Satoru Ohya Medal was proposed for Outstanding Achievement concerning the International Year of Planet Earth at the 1st Board Meeting of the IYPE in January, 2007.