

JOINT PRESS RELEASE: International Council for Science (ICSU), International Social Science Council (ISSC) and UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN ISDR)

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China to host new international disaster research programme

Paris, France—The International Council for Science (ICSU) today announced that China will host the office of the new international programme, Integrated Research on Disaster Risk (IRDR). The International Programme Office for IRDR will be established in Beijing at the Headquarters of the Center for Earth Observation and Digital Earth (CEODE)—the first time an international office of this type has been hosted in Asia.

The IRDR is a major new 10-year international research programme that aims to provide answers to the growing global problem of disasters and how countries can reduce the root causes of disaster risk. In a break from past approaches, it will combine diverse expertise and perspectives into one coordinated effort, drawing on the natural, socio-economic, health and engineering sciences.

ICSU, along with the other IRDR co-sponsors—the International Social Science Council (ISSC) and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN ISDR)—selected Beijing following an international call for offers. The office will be jointly funded by the China Association for Science and Technology (CAST) and the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS).

'China offers an impressive array of facilities and talented researchers within Beijing, and throughout the country. I am confident that the programme office will benefit from the support and resources that will be put at its disposal,' said Professor Gordon McBean, Chair of the Scientific Committee overseeing the programme.

'The research community in China—and throughout Asia—will also benefit since IRDR and its office will be a catalyst for the interdisciplinary work that is necessary for sustainable risk reduction,' McBean added.

CEODE is recognised for its commitment to scientific research, with wide experience and expertise in research on disaster mitigation—especially remote sensing, data collection and modelling. The centre also has as a proven track record in international cooperation; establishing long-term partnerships with institutions from more than 20 countries and international organisations.

The International Programme Office will not only support the management and administrative needs of IRDR; it will also play a major role in organising the capacity building and outreach activities that will be important for the success of the programme.

'Our first task will be to ensure that the office has a secretariat that is both innovative and responsive. This will ensure that the IRDR programme has the behind-the-scenes support that will be essential if it is to successfully address the challenge of natural and human-induced hazards and disasters,' said McBean.

More information

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IRDR: http://www.icsu.org/1_icsuinscience/ENVI_Hazards_1.html

CEODE: <http://english.ceode.cas.cn>

PDF of press release: http://www.icsu.org/3_mediacentre/RELEASES/IRDR_IPO_PR_Nov09.pdf

About Integrated Research on Disaster Risk (IRDR)

IRDR is a major new international programme that undertakes co-ordinated, interdisciplinary research leading to more effective societal responses to the risks associated with natural and human-induced environmental hazards. It has three main research objectives: improved knowledge of hazards, vulnerability and risk; a better understanding of decision-making in complex and changing circumstances; and a reduction of risk and losses through knowledge-based actions. It is this integrated approach that takes IRDR beyond any programme tried before.

IRDR runs for 10 years and integrates expertise from the natural, socio-economic, health and engineering sciences, coupled with socio-economic analysis, studies of communications and public and political responses, and in-depth studies of individual disaster events. The programme also recognises that disaster prevention and mitigation are critical in reducing global poverty, and an integral part of development efforts.

IRDR is sponsored by the International Council for Science (ICSU), the International Social Science Council (ISSC) and the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR).