

2016 to Be the International Year of Global Understanding

"Building bridges between global thinking and local action"

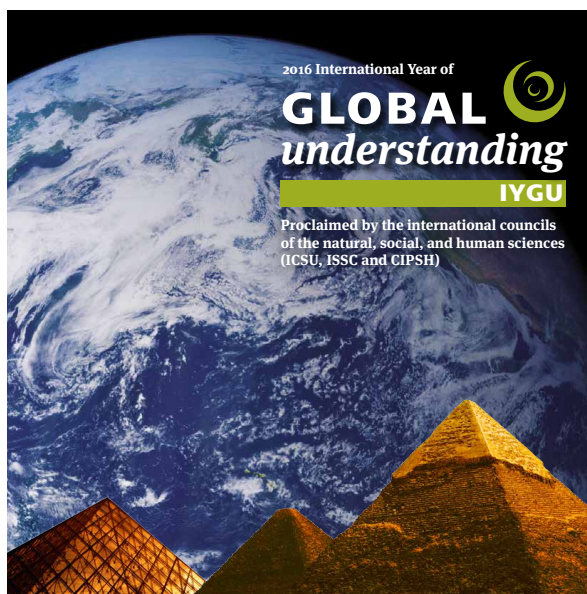
Last September, on the first day of the World Social Science Forum 2015 in Durban, South Africa, the International Council for Science (ICSU), the International Social Science Council (ISSC), and the International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences (CIPSH) jointly announced that 2016 would be the International Year of Global Understanding (YIGU). The aim of YIGU is to promote better understanding of how the local impacts the global in order to foster smart policies to tackle critical global challenges, such as climate change, food security, and migration.

"We want to build bridges between global thinking and local action," said Prof. Benno Werlen of the Friedrich Schiller University in Jena, Germany. "Only when we truly understand the effects of our personal choices—for example in eating, drinking and producing—on the planet, can we make appropriate and effective changes," said Werlen, who initiated this project of the International Geographical Union (IGU).

Ways to translate scientific insight into more sustainable lifestyles will be the main focus of YIGU activities for 2016: research projects, educational programmes and information campaigns. The project seeks to go beyond a narrow focus on environmental protection and climate policy to explore quality of life issues and the sustainable, long-term use of local resources.

"Sustainable development is a global challenge, but solving it requires transforming the local—the way each of us lives, consumes, and works. While global negotiations on climate attack the sustainability crisis from above, the YIGU complements them beautifully with coordinated solutions from below, by getting individuals to understand and change their everyday habits. This twin approach elevates our chance of success against this crisis, the gravest humanity has ever seen," said former ICSU President and Nobel Laureate Yuan-Tseh Lee.

For example, on each day in 2016, the YIGU will highlight a change to an everyday activity that has been scientifically proven to be more sustainable than current practice. Primers on everyday life which take cultural diversity and local practice into account will



be compiled and distributed. "Now more than ever, it is vital that we find the strength to understand and relate to the positions, thoughts, and expectations of others and seek dialogue instead of confrontation," said Professor Klaus Töpfer, Executive Director of the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS).

It is hoped that this focus on tangible, local action will generate ideas for research programmes and school curricula, as well as highlight best practice examples. Wherever possible, activities will be communicated in several languages. Using this bottom-up approach, the YIGU hopes to support and extend the work of initiatives such as Future Earth, the UN's Post-2015 Development Agenda, and the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.

Further information at www.global-understanding.info

Green Chemistry for Life Grant Programme—Call for Applications

The PhosAgro/UNESCO/IUPAC grant programme aims to promote the implementation of innovative research projects in green chemistry that respect the 12 principles of green chemistry. Young scientists aged 35 years or less with a PhD degree (or equivalent) in chemistry or its allied areas are invited to compete. Successful projects will be selected by an international scientific jury. Grants will be up to US\$30,000 and should be awarded for research that may be completed in one year.