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Polar science gathering in Oslo to discuss climate change

The IPY Oslo Science Conference, scheduled for 8-12 June, will be the biggest polar science meeting ever. The conference will celebrate and publish early results from the International Polar Year 2007-2008 (IPY), with particular emphasis on new knowledge about the linkages between climate change in the Polar Regions and global climate systems.

IPY has emerged as the largest internationally coordinated research effort in the past 50 years. Substantial new funding was pledged for IPY – more than US\$ 400 million. The conference in Oslo is the first opportunity after completion of IPY field activities for direct interaction among all the 160 IPY science cluster projects. Participation is expected from more than 60 nations.

So far in excess of two thousand scientists have submitted their papers to the IPY Oslo Science Conference and the gathering is already twice as large as the last, and up to then largest, global polar science meeting in terms of submissions. In particular it is likely to be a good turnout of early career scientists, recruited to polar science through IPY.

The International Polar Year 2007–2008 (IPY) was an intensive, internationally coordinated scientific research campaign in the Arctic and the Antarctic sponsored by the International Council for Science (ICSU) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). In two action-packed years, IPY researchers observed exciting new phenomena, made fundamental scientific discoveries, developed new methods and tools and, most importantly, gained new understanding of the role of the Polar Regions in the total Earth system.

The IPY data collection and intensified observing took place during a time when our planet was changing faster than ever in recorded human history, especially in the Polar Regions. Polar changes are critical because of various feedbacks involving the ocean, the cryosphere and/or the biosphere, each of which has the potential to accelerate the rates of global changes. What happens in the Polar Regions affects the rest of the world and concerns us all. Scientific results presented in this conference will thus be highly relevant to COP 16 in Mexico in November.

During the International Polar Year the often spectacular activities in the Arctic and the Antarctic attracted a lot of attention and provided for innovative efforts in public outreach. The IPY Oslo Science Conference is an essential opportunity to display and explore the full breadth and implications of IPY activities.

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