



## Editorial

Dear Reader,

The year is winding down rapidly but there remains many important news items and events to report. Next week is the AARSE conference in Cairo and EIS-AFRICA will be holding a general meeting and hosting an exhibition booth together with our partners at the World Resources Institute (WRI). If you are attending the conference please do visit our booth as we would like to meet with you and finally a face to an email address. This month's newsletter carries a report on the launch of the African Geo Information Research Network (AGIRN) web portal. This is a joint initiative between the Human Sciences Research Council's: GIS Division (lead by Mr. Craig Schwabe) and ourselves. We know that this web portal will be a valuable resource to you. There are

also a wide variety of articles dealing with issues such as water, food security, the ozone layer and tree planting activities in Ghana. We trust that you will find all of these articles interesting. Finally I like to thank all the EIS-AFRICA members for voting for the three new Board Directors. We will be reporting the results of our AGM and elections in the next edition of the newsletter. Until next month.

Regards

Sives Govender

## EIS-AFRICA and the HSRC Launch New Web Portal

EIS-AFRICA has for many years, been inundated with requests from the African Geoinformation community for a service where high quality research studies, key note presentations, policies and position papers could be accessed and discussed. We have found that very few people in our community have the opportunity to attend and participate in GIS conferences and meetings and therefore face barriers in accessing vital information for research purposes and have no forum to present their own research studies. With this in mind, EIS-AFRICA and the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) of South African have designed and developed the African Geo Information Research Network (AGIRN) web portal. (See [www.agirn.org](http://www.agirn.org)). The rationale for the development of the African Geo Information Research Network (AGIRN) is to address one of the key concerns of the geo-information community of Africa i.e to provide access to research studies and paper presentations written by African Geo information experts as very few of these studies and papers became accessible to the broader geo-information community. EIS-AFRICA and The Human Sciences Research Council's (HSRC) Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Centre have decided that it is imperative to develop a geo-information research portal that will ensure the establishment of a forum for a vigorous engagement by African researchers. The development of AGIRN will provide the geo-information research community a mechanism to publish and

access high quality work, to share in geo-information knowledge and to engage in discussion through a widely accessible web based medium. This portal aims not only to serve the geo-information practitioners across the continent but also the many decision makers and planners in Africa. The key Objectives of AGIRN are to: Regularly disseminate geo-information research material to researchers, policy makers and programme planners through the use of appropriate technologies; Facilitate the prioritization of the geo-information research agenda through consultation; Facilitate networking, information sharing, information exchange and joint research projects with partners in Africa; Publish geo-information research, case studies and best practices in Africa; Look at mechanisms of strengthening individual and institutional skills in the use of geo-information in Africa; Update AGIRN's database on specific research programmes, methodologies and areas that are in the continental interest; Encourage and facilitate the interaction between key stakeholders.

We want AGIRN to be your resource and encourage you to develop AGIRN further through commenting on the site and also publishing your research papers and studies.

## Upcoming Events

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**International Symposium on Agricultural Innovation Systems in Africa**, Kampala, Uganda, November 2006. Researchers and practitioners are invited to submit abstracts on good practice in studying and enhancing innovation in agricultural research, development, and education. Papers need not be directly linked to agriculture and natural resource management. Contributions are also sought for an interactive marketplace in the form of posters, videos, slides, photographs, websites, maps, group interactions, participatory theatre, and other lively ways of showing how work on innovation systems is being conducted in Africa and elsewhere. The deadline for submissions is August 15, 2006. For more information, see [http://www.ciat.cgiar.org/africa/eri\\_symposium06\\_fulltext.htm](http://www.ciat.cgiar.org/africa/eri_symposium06_fulltext.htm)

**Young Scientists' Global Change Conference 2006**, Beijing, China, 2—8 November 2006. Applications: [http://www.start.org/links/announce\\_oppo/YSC\\_Application%205.doc](http://www.start.org/links/announce_oppo/YSC_Application%205.doc). Wherever possible, those having papers/posters accepted will have their full costs (including travel and accommodation) covered.

**2<sup>ND</sup> ArcGIS WEST AFRICA USER CONFERENCE (AWAUC 2006)**, 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2006, La Palm Royal Beach Hotel, Accra, Ghana. “*Unlocking the power of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for attaining development goals in West Africa*” is the theme for this year’s ArcGIS user conference for West Africa. This conference provides the ArcGIS user as well as those unfamiliar with the benefits of GIS, an opportunity to meet GIS professionals and peers to focus on the growing use of GIS in the West African sub region. Paper and Poster Presentations would cover industry and application areas highlighting three sub-themes:

- GeoSpatial Information: A foundation for Sustainable Environment
- Driving the business forward: Unlocking GIS for Services Planning
- Meeting our millennium challenge goals: Transport, Agriculture, *et al*

Technical workshops, map gallery, raffle draw and more available, visit [www.sambus.com](http://www.sambus.com) to learn more about the conference.

The **Global Spatial Data Infrastructure Association** is pleased to invite the global spatial data community to attend their 9th international conference in Santiago, Chile. The primary sessions will occur Monday through Friday November 6-10, 2006. Continuing with their organizational goal of fostering spatial data infrastructure developments in support of important worldwide needs, the theme of GSDI-9 is “Spatial Information: Tool for Reducing Poverty.” The conference will be held at the Diego Portales Convention Center in the heart of the lovely city of Santiago. The program promises to be the most exciting and best yet. For further information, see: [www.gsdi9.cl](http://www.gsdi9.cl)

**ESSP Open Science Conference**, 9—12 November 2006, Beijing, China. Call for contributions: We invite scientists, policy makers, practitioners, scholars, members of the private sector and journalists to participate in the ESSP Open Science Conference and to submit online abstracts (poster or parallel session presentations) through the OSC website ([http://www.essp.org/ESSP2006/CallPapers\\_index.html](http://www.essp.org/ESSP2006/CallPapers_index.html)). Please note that this call for contributions will primarily be for poster presentations, and that poster sessions will be an integral part of the Conference. Poster sessions will also relate directly to OSC parallel sessions. A list of the session titles and their keywords/brief descriptions can be found on the online submission form and on the Conference website (see web link above). Please note that we cannot accept late submissions (deadline: 01 May 2006) and that abstracts should not exceed 250 words. Thank you for your interest in the ESSP OSC.

**International Symposium on Geoinformatics in Nature Protection Regions**, Dresden, Germany, 13—14 November 2006. For further information see <http://www.natureprotection-gis.de>.

**2nd Annual International conference of the African Science Academy Development Initiative (ASADI)** on “Prioritizing Food Security Policies for Health and Development in Africa”, hosted by the Cameroon Academy of Science in Yaoundé Cameroon, November 12–16, 2006. The second meeting would consist of a first day of joint and executive sessions involving the Network of African Science Academies (NASAC) and the Board on African Science Academy Development (BASAD); a 2-day public launch and scientific event focusing on the use of science and technology in improving policy decision-making related to food security for health and development in Africa and a 2-day learning collaborative involving African science academy leaders and staff, including a 1-day session involving media representatives from each African country. Resources held by the US National Academies have been set aside under the African Science Academy Development Initiative (ASADI) for an annual Africa-US joint symposium and learning collaborative over the ten years of the project. The goals for this annual event are to raise the visibility of science academies in Africa and to promote their potential role in informing government decision making in a variety of areas, to establish and build long-term partnerships among the US National Academies and African academies of science, to strengthen African partnerships, and to provide a venue for specific training opportunities for African science academies. For more information, see <http://www.assaf.co.za>.

## Uganda Wins Wetland Management Award

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UGANDA has scooped an award for best African country in sustainable management of wetlands.

Environment minister Maria Mutagamba received the award from African Union representative Dr. Abou Bamba at a conference for the African ministers' Council. She handed over the award to the First Lady, Mrs. Janet Museveni, who presided over the function.

Mutagamba said Uganda was the only country in Africa with a wetlands inspection division in addition to the 10 internationally recognised Ramsar sites. She said Uganda was the only country in Africa which had hosted the Ramsar convention and the only country in Africa, which had held the presidency for the Ramsar convention. Uganda hosted the convention last year in August at Munyonyo.

"Our recognition on wetlands management was not by chance. There are a lot of things Uganda has done for sustainable management of wetlands," she said.

Mutagamba added that Uganda had good policies on wetlands compared to other African countries.

She said that due to industrial and environmental degradation, water levels for lakes and rivers were falling, causing what she termed as water stress.

She cited Mali, where she said a bottle of water is more expensive than a bottle of whiskey.

She attributed depreciation of lake levels to the rising temperatures as a result of global warming and evaporation.

German ambassador Dr. Alexander Muehlen said when one first comes to Uganda, the im-

pression is that there is sufficient water for everybody.

*Source: AllAfrica.com*

## Food for Africa—From Africa

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"Famines are created by policies, not by pests or droughts" writes Douglas Southgate, Professor of Agricultural Economics, Ohio State University, for the Guest Column of Accra Mail. Africa is the only place where agricultural productivity has decreased; poverty and malnutrition affect hundred of millions of Africans; and environmental adversities are omnipresent, and worsening due to prevailing agricultural practices.

"The application of improved farming technologies - fertilizer, pesticides, hybrid seeds - would bring clear benefits to the region" says Southgate. However, the key ele-

ments of the "Green Revolution" provide only the start of an answer. "The full answer lies with government and governance."

Southgate argues that lack of political and economical freedom, low level of public funding for the agricultural sector, and the highest agricultural tariffs in the world are largely to blame for the collapse of agriculture. The involvement of the international community has done little to improve the situation, adds Southgate, as technical assistance and funds have increase the role of governments in the sector, leading to heavier taxes and tariffs, and to state-run monopolies. As a

result, private initiatives and entrepreneurship are being stifled.

"Above all, governments need to get out of the way, to cut restrictive tariffs, to remove state marketing boards, to allow businesses to work - because Africans are perfectly capable of feeding themselves if only they were allowed to", concludes Southgate.

Read the full article at: <http://allafrica.com/stories/200610170484.html>

*Source: CropBiotech Update*

# United Nations Spatial Data Infrastructure - UNSDI

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During the Sixth UNGIWG Plenary Meeting held in Addis Ababa in October 2005, endorsement for a UN Spatial Data Infrastructure (UNSDI) to support coordinated efforts in the development and management of geo-spatial information was made.

"Spatial Data Infrastructure" (SDI) is the base collection of technologies, data, human resources, policies, institutional arrangements, and partnerships that enable the availability, exchange of and access to geographically-related information using common practices, protocols, and specifications.

SDI is a framework to enable users with different mandates and disciplines to operate in a cohesive manner to acquire, access, retrieve, analyze and disseminate geospatial data and information in an easy and secure way. It particularly helps to improve the efficiency of development, management and use of geospatial databases.

One of the first steps agreed upon during Addis was to undertake a base-line study, identifying the elements/components, framing the issues and developing an action-plan for an UNSDI. This would then be presented during UNGIWG Seven in Santiago for discussions, amendments and endorsement.

## ***UNSDI development at national and regional level***

Underlying the UNSDI is the need to link UNSDI with national SDI capacities, both in developed and developing

countries. Constructive action has so far been taken with The Netherlands where a UNSDI – Netherlands Coordination Office (NCO) has been established as the outcome of a potential UNSDI.nl partners meeting with eight leading Dutch technical institutions on 7 March. The overall goals of the NCO, as integral part of the preparatory process for the 7th UNGIWG Plenary, are:

Fulfilling national government's policies with respect to issues relying on the use of geo-information, whether it be national governments themselves or in order to support sustainable development or resource management in developing countries;

Coordination and execution of geo-information disclosure activities for large enterprises or companies in order to fulfil their Corporate Governance goals;

Creation of an operational link between users and suppliers of geo-information to the United Nations Spatial Data Infrastructure (UNSDI) through GeoNetwork, this in order to make the information and/or services of the suppliers accessible for sustainable development purposes world-wide.

More information about the activities of the UNSDI-NCO can be found at [www.unsdi.nl](http://www.unsdi.nl)

A similar process has been started up with the Czech Republic with a successful kick-off meeting near Prague on 18 May 2006, in which seven Czech Republic technical institutions took part and which resulted in the establishment of [www.unsdi.cz](http://www.unsdi.cz).

A third UNSDI kick-off meeting was successfully held in Budapest, Hungary on 28 September 2006 with sixteen participating Hungarian technical and socio-economic institutions. Discussions for a similar process are ongoing with the Federal Republic of Germany. The first dialogue meeting between UNGIWG-UNSDI and national and regional-level SDI partners is planned to be held on 1 and 2 March 2007, hosted by the European Space Agency (ESA) at its ESRIN facilities in Frascati, Italy. This meeting will be organized back to back with the final ESA-FAO-JRC "Heterogeneous Missions Accessibility (HMA) Workshop" which will be conducted by ESA on 27 and 28 February 2007 at ESRIN. The draft programme for the first UNSDI Global Partners meeting (UGPM) will be circulated following the conclusion of the 7th UNGIWG Plenary in Santiago. UNSDI development discussions are also ongoing with the Federal Republic of Germany. Furthermore, SDI authorities in the following countries and regional organizations responded positively to an open UNGIWG invitation to join the UNSDI development process: Australia, Austria, Brazil, Chile, Hungary, Jamaica, India, Japan, Mexico, Morocco, Mongolia, Nigeria, Spain and South Africa. The following regional organizations joined the process: The Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD) in Nairobi, Kenya, the International Centre for Mountain Development (ICIMOD) in Kathmandu, Nepal, and the Regional Centre for Training in Aerospace Sur-

## New Desert Locust Threat in North, West Africa

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The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) warns of another possible locust invasion of North and West Africa. Adults of the crop-devouring insects were recently detected in northwestern Mauritania, and neighboring countries have already been warned by the FAO Locust Group to increase the level of alert against a potential Desert Locust threat.

In 2004, a Desert Locust upsurge caused heavy damage to agriculture in several parts of West Africa. By summer 2005, the upsurge has ended, thanks to unfavorable weather and control operations. This time, FAO intends to test a new control method which employs a natural fungus, called *Metarhizium anisopliae*. The fungus infects locust hoppers in such a way that they stop feed-

ing and die in one to three weeks. According to FAO's Assistant Director-General Alexander Müller, "the current situation is an opportunity to field test environmentally friendly alternatives to conventional pesticides."

*Source: CropBiotech Update*

## Ethiopia: Water facilities begin services

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Over 50 potable water facilities constructed at a cost of over 8.6 million birr in three woredas of Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples State have gone operational, the State Water Resource Development Bureau said.

Bureau Head Jemal Reshid told ENA at the inaugural ceremony of the projects that about 50,000 residents would become beneficiaries of the projects executed in Meskan, Sodo and Mareko woredas.

He said the state government and the respective woreda administrations allocated the budget while UNICEF provided financial support for the execution of the projects.

Jemal said the projects, implemented with the participation of the public, include the digging of 46 water wells and the development of springs in rural localities, which had no access to clean water service.

UNICEF Representative Hanes

Speroyet on the occasion said the Fund would strengthen the effort to expand potable water service in rural areas.

*Source: Ethiopian Herald*

## Council to use solar panels for street lighting

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Kampala City Council has resolved to drop the use of hydropower and switch to solar energy as a measure to solve power cuts in the city.

City mayor Nasser Sebagala said a solar energy system was identified as a cheaper and reliable option in case of load shedding.

"We have resolved to switch to a solar energy system since it is cheaper and reliable unlike this seasonal hydro power supply. In fact we shall save a lot," Sebagala told Daily Monitor on Thursday at City Hall.

He said the council would save about 70 percent of the Shs700 million it has been spending on

power every month.

*Source: Daily Monitor*

## Sudan Report: Environment Between Development and Deterioration

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The Friendship Hall in Khartoum recently witnessed a one-day workshop on the occasion of the Arab Day for Environment, under the motto 'The Deserts and Sustainable Development.'

The workshop, in which a number of experts and specialists in the field of environment participated, was addressed by the State Minister at the Ministry of Environment and Physical Development, Tressa Siricio. Prof. Mohamed Ali Awad Al-Karim, who is concerned with the environmental issues, presented a working paper on 'The Environment between Development and Destruction'. In his working paper, the Prof. shed light on some environmental domains, which related to the environmental deterioration and its impacts on the people, the importance for rec-

ognizing its effects on the climatic changes economically and environmentally and to connect the climatic change with development and energy. As Sudan is the largest African country, prof. Awad Al-Karim's working paper recommendations focus on environment in the Sudan, he said that it needs building capabilities in the field of environment by training qualified cadres to go ahead with the environmental work and its development. He recommended the strengthening and boosting of the existing environmental units and centres and provides them with modern equipments which help in making them cope with new technologies. Prof. Awad Al-Karim recommended the reduction of poverty by creating non-traditional methods and means that could be founded by the contribution of the poor. He also recommended the

spreading and consolidation of environmental awareness among the people by using non-conventional ways and means for realizing the required goals. Prof. Awad Al-Karim called for rationalization of available resources of energy and expanding the circle of its users for purifying the environmental systems, he also indicated the necessity of activating and unifying acts related to environment and speeding up of the implementation of all standards and meteorology organization's systems for the benefit of environment

*Source: Sudan Vision*

## Ghana: School Children Urged to Cultivate Habit of Tree Planting

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Mr. Issah Ketekeku, Deputy Northern Regional Minister has urged school children in the region to cultivate the habit of tree planting in and around their school compounds and in their communities to help protect the environment.

He called on them to undertake regular clean-up exercises within their surroundings and educate their parents on sound environmental practices to sensitise their communities.

Mr Ketekeku was addressing children from selected junior secondary schools in the Tamale metropolis after an environmental sanitation campaign and a Ramadan general clean-up organized by the Ghana National Scholarship Beneficiaries Association (GNASBA) to mark the 13th anniversary of the Association in Tamale.

The clean-up exercise was sponsored by Fan Milk. The school children undertook a three-hour clean-up exercise in the metropolis to sensitise the public on the need for environmental cleanliness.

Mr Ketekeku attributed the rising environmental degradation in the country to indiscipline, saying: "It is common to see both young and elderly people defecating indiscriminately in public."

The Deputy Minister, on behalf of GNASBA appealed to NGOs and all well meaning Ghanaians to help raise 20,000 litterbins for schools and communities throughout the country to help enforce cleanliness.

Mr Ketekeku used the occasion to appeal to the National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT) to return to the classrooms while negotiations on their conditions of service with the government con-

tinue.

Mr. Baffour Akwasi Opong, National Chairman of the GNASBA said the environmental sanitation and education campaign seeks to promote the Schools Health and Agricultural programmes, as a means to inculcate in the youth a new sense of cultural attitudes to sustain good waste management practices and environmental protection.

He hoped the exercise, which forms part of the activities to usher in the holy Ramadan Festival, would become a regular feature in the Moslem communities.

*Source: AllAfrica.com*

## Interesting Sites

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African Centre of Meteorological Application for Development (ACMAD): <http://www.acmad.net/homepage.htm>. Weather, climate and environment data as well as satellite imagery.

African Clearinghouse for Spatial Data: <http://www.geoafrica.net/links.html>. Interaction maps of Africa and links to various imagery, ASTER, MODIS etc.

AFRICOVER: <http://www.africover.org/>. Landcover data for Africa, satellite imagery.

## UNESCO Remote Sensing Workshop 2006

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Application of space technology was identified at the Johannesburg Earth Summit (Article 27) as an approach to help reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Its importance was again stressed in Kyoto, Japan where it was agreed to have a special focus on Africa. The Tiger Project workshop in Morocco was held to convert this objective into action. A follow-up workshop was held in Pretoria, South Africa 18-20 February 2004.

Within these lines a training course, the first training initiative under UNESCO's SIMDAS Flagship Programme, was organised by the UNESCO Windhoek office in cooperation with UNESCO's Harare and Nairobi Offices, at the University of Western Cape in October 2005. The theme of the workshop was "Application of Remote Sensing for Integrated Management of Water Resources and Ecosystems".

The success of the training activity and the growing demand in training professionals in utilizing the tool of remote sensing for a numerous applications resulted in the decision to or-

ganize a follow-up workshop. The workshop will be held at the University of Western Cape, in South Africa, 22 - 25 of November 2006. The facilitator will be Dr. Yongxin Xu, UNESCO's Chair in Geohydrology and it will be the result of cooperation between UNESCO Windhoek, UNESCO Harare and UNESCO Nairobi Offices.

The objective of the workshop is to train scientists and / or governmental officials whose line of work is related to remote sensing and IWRM in order to update their knowledge via the acquisition of new techniques developed for IWRM. The workshop aims to contribute towards capacity building on the application of remote sensing for integrated management of water resources in Southern Africa.

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## Upcoming Events (cont.)

**GEO-III: Third Plenary Session of the Group on Earth Observations (GEO)**, Bonn, Germany, 28 - 29 November 2006. For details, visit [http://www.earthobservations.org/meetings/plenary\\_mtgs.html#GEOIII](http://www.earthobservations.org/meetings/plenary_mtgs.html#GEOIII)

**The Australasian Ontology Workshop (AOW 2006)**, Held in Conjunction with the 19th Australian Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence (AI'06), December 4 or 5, 2006, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia. AI'06 Conference website: <http://www.comp.utas.edu.au/ai06/>. The workshop will seek submission of papers on original and unpublished research on all aspects of ontology research, including, but not limited to

- \* ontology models and theories,
- \* ontologies and the semantic web;
- \* interoperability in ontologies;
- \* multi-agent systems and ontologies;
- \* description logics for ontologies;
- \* reasoning with ontologies;
- \* ontology harvesting on the web;
- \* ontology of agents and actions;
- \* ontology visualisation;
- \* ontology engineering and management;
- \* ontology-based information extraction and retrieval
- \* ontology merging, alignment and integration;
- \* web ontology languages;
- \* formal concept analysis and ontologies.

The authors of selected papers from the Workshop will also be invited to submit longer, extended versions of their papers to a Special Issue on Advances in Ontologies of Expert Systems: The Journal of Knowledge Engineering published by Blackwells (<http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/journal.asp?ref=0266-4720&site=1>). The special issue will seek submissions of papers dealing with all aspects of ontology research, including the theoretical foundations, design, implementation and prototype development issues, ontologies in multi-agent systems and the Semantic Web, comparative studies, and applications, as well as those describing new challenges arising out of applications. Each paper will go through a rigorous review process. The special issue is scheduled to appear in late 2007. Further details including paper submission and important dates are available from [http://www.comp.mq.edu.au/conferences/aow/EXSY\\_CFP.html](http://www.comp.mq.edu.au/conferences/aow/EXSY_CFP.html).

**3rd International Conference: "Earth from Space—the Most Effective Solutions."**, 4—6 December, Moscow, Russia. The goal of the conference is to show the experience of practical use of satellite monitoring in different branches of economy together with the recent developments in remote sensing as the backbone of cost-efficient functioning economic systems. For more information please visit conference web site [www.transparentworld.ru/conference](http://www.transparentworld.ru/conference)

**2nd South African International Workshop on Sensor Web Enablement**, Cape Town, South Africa, 5 - 7 February 2007. The Sensor Web Alliance invites you to a forum that brings together researchers from academia and industry to discuss the latest developments in Sensor Web research and share ideas on how best to tackle research questions arising from this research. For details, visit <http://ict4eo.meraka.csir.co.za/SensorwebAlliance/Workshop> or contact Andrew Terhorst at [aterhorst@csir.co.za](mailto:aterhorst@csir.co.za) or telephone: +27 12 841-4476.

**2nd Space and Society Conference "Space Options for the 21st Century"**, ESTEC, Noordwijk, The Netherlands from 27 February – 1 March 2007. The first announcement and call for papers can be found on the European Space Agency's Conference Web site: <http://www.congrex.nl/06a12/>

**5th International Symposium on Spatial Data Quality**, 13-15 June 2007, Enschede, The Netherlands. Further information: ISSDQ 2007 Secretariat ITC - Ms. Saskia Tempelman, P.O. Box 6, 7500AA Enschede, The Netherlands, T: +31-53-4874333, F: +31-53-4874554, E: [issdq2007@itc.nl](mailto:issdq2007@itc.nl)

## Upcoming events (cont.)

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The National Organising Committee of the World Environmental Education Congress 2007, is pleased to announce that the **Fourth World Environmental Education Congress (WEEC 2007)** is due to take place in South Africa from Monday, 2 - Friday, 6 July 2007 at The International Convention Centre in Durban. For further information, visit the WEEC 2007 website on [www.weec2007.com](http://www.weec2007.com) for future updates and online registration for delegates and potential presenters. **Invitation to exhibit:** *This is the first time that the World Environmental Education Congress comes to Africa, and we are delighted to be hosting the WEEC 2007 Congress as it comes at a time when there are calls for revisiting our teaching and learning in and beyond the classroom. As responsible business and industry; government; researchers; practitioners and policy makers we need to ensure that we contribute to the values and goals of sustainability and what better place than to exhibit at our exhibition. This provides an opportunity to showcase your contributions to environment sustainability and decade of education for sustainable development. The Exhibition component of the event will provide an extensive showcase for all environmentally orientated companies and organizations to promote their services, products and technologies at the premier environmental conference in Southern Africa. Maximum exposure for exhibitors has been carefully planned and lunches and teas being held in the Exhibition Hall. Furthermore, entertainment will be presented in the exhibition area to ensure that delegates are drawn to the area to spend time and network. All this is being arranged in an effort to make sure that you, the exhibitor, have maximum exposure.*

## Ozone Hole Size Sets Record

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This year's Antarctic ozone hole is the biggest ever, government scientists said Thursday.

The so-called hole is a region where there is severe depletion of the layer of ozone \_ a form of oxygen \_ in the upper atmosphere that protects life on Earth by blocking the sun's ultraviolet rays.

Scientists say human-produced gases such as bromine and chlorine damage the layer, causing the hole. That's why many compounds such as spray-can propellants have been banned in recent years.

"From Sept. 21 to 30, the average area of the ozone hole was the largest ever observed, at 10.6 million square miles," said Paul Newman, atmospheric scientist at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, Greenbelt, Md. That's larger than the area of North America.

In addition, satellite measurements observed a low reading of 85 Dobson units of ozone on Oct. 8. That's down from a thickness of 300 Dobson units in July.

The ozone hole is considered to be the area with total column ozone below 220 Dobson Units. A reading of 100 Dobson Units means that if all the ozone in the air above a point were brought down to sea-level pressure and cooled to freezing it would form a layer 1 centimeter thick. A reading of 250 Dobson Units translates to a layer about an inch thick.

In a critical layer of air between eight and 13 miles above the surface, the measurement was only 1.2 Dobson unit, down from 125 in July.

"These numbers mean the ozone is virtually gone in this layer of the atmosphere," said David Hofmann, director of the Global Monitoring Division at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Earth System Research Laboratory. "The depleted layer has an unusual vertical extent this year, so it appears that the 2006 ozone hole will go down as a record-setter."

The size and thickness of the ozone hole varies from year to year, becoming larger when temperatures are lower.

Because of international agreements banning ozone-depleting substances, researchers calculated that these chemicals peaked in Antarctica in 2001 and have been declining. However, many of them have extremely long lifetimes once released into the air.

While there are year-to-year variations, scientists expect a slow recovery of the ozone layer by the year 2065, anticipating declines in the use of damaging chemicals.

Source: Associated Press



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## **November Newsletter**

Any contributions, which are welcomed, must reach us by 23 November 2006. Contributions can be sent to [svorster@eis-africa.org](mailto:svorster@eis-africa.org).

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## **United Nations Spatial Data Infrastructure - UNSDI (cont.)**

veys (RECTAS) in Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

As a result of a UNSDI kick-off meeting in Hungary on 28 September, a [www.unsdi.hu](http://www.unsdi.hu) is in the making and will be online by about 1 November.

A draft UNSDI Implementation Strategy discussion paper by UNGIWG consultant Barry L. Henricksen will be one of the key inputs for UNGIWG-7 in Santiago. This paper currently contains three sections to which a fourth one on a draft UNSDI Reference Architecture will be added by mid-October. To download the draft, go to <http://www.eis-africa.org>.

*Submitted by Jelle Hielkema*

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