



Editorial

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the 52nd edition of EIS NEWS. Once again we have been able to provide you with a variety of diverse articles, reports and announcements. This month we have included an interesting article on opening the digital doorway for Africa's children and while the article is not specific to the GIS/EIS field, it offers valuable insights into possible mechanisms that attempt to break down barriers confronting Africa's children especially when it comes to computer literacy. We have also improved our "Interesting Websites" section and we will be providing you with links to websites that we believe you will find interesting and relevant to your work. You will also notice an advertisement in this newsletter. It is a service we provide to all the EIS-AFRICA corporate members. If you are part of a commercial GIS/RS company and become a member of EIS-

AFRICA, you are entitled to a free advertisement in our newsletter. This has to be incentive enough for you to join us. We would like to remind you that the AARSE and GSDI conferences are just a few weeks away and we encourage you to participate in these excellent meetings as they provide you, the EIS/GIS/RS professional, with an opportunity to meet the leading academics, scientists, vendors and most importantly colleagues from around the world and share your experiences and expertise. Until next month, we wish you well and to our Muslim readers, happy Ramadan.

Regards

Sives Govender

Scientific Data for Decision Making Toward Sustainable Development: Senegal River Basin Case Study

The U.S. National Committee for CODATA collaborated with the Senegalese National CODATA Committee to convene a Workshop on Scientific Data for

Decision Making Toward Sustainable Development: Senegal River Basin Case Study, which was held on March 11-15, 2002, in Dakar, Senegal. This workshop examined, on a multidisciplinary level, data sources and data handling in the West Africa region, using the Senegal River basin (in Senegal, and in the bordering countries of Mali, Mauritania, and Guinea) as a case study, to determine how these scientific and technical data assets are or can be better managed and used in decision making related to sustainable development.

An organizing committee consisting of eight members representative of the expertise and experience required, four from the United States and four from Senegal, planned the workshop. This organizing committee was cochaired by Abdoulaye Gaye, chair of the Senegal National CODATA Committee, and William Jobin of Blue Nile Associates. Areas of expertise that were not covered by this committee were augmented by additional workshop attendees. The organizing committee developed the workshop agenda, prepared for the meeting and related logistics, and selected and invited all the meeting attendees. The

U.S. National Committee for CODATA had the responsibility for publishing the workshop summary and disseminating the report.

The workshop included researchers and data managers from the United States, Senegal, and other African countries who have collected, managed, and used data regarding the Senegal River basin. The meeting helped identify local and foreign data resources related to the ecology and environment of the Senegal River system in West Africa, and to the related health and economic activity of the populations. In the Senegal River basin, for example, scientists have been considering issues such as the hydrology and environmental impact of the new dams (Diama and Manantali), biodiversity and ecosystem assessments, protection and use of natural resources, and the monitoring and improvement of the health of the local population. A considerable amount of remote sensing, aerial, and in-situ data already has been collected and archived for this region, so it provides a robust example of what has been done in one region of the developing world, as well as what might be done in the future.

The workshop provided U.S. federal government and academic data experts and researchers with an inside view of

Upcoming Events

First Eastern Africa ESRI User Conference (EAUC), Nairobi, Kenya, 5 - 6 October 2006. Oakar Services Ltd, ESRI's Eastern Africa Distributor invites you to join current and potential users of ESRI software and members of the regional spatial data community at the very 1st Eastern Africa ESRI User Conference. **2-4/10/06 Pre-conference Program** will include (a) ESRI Instructor-led GIS training sessions (b) Pre-conference seminar *GIS in Law Enforcement & Homeland Security*. The EAUC will feature paper presentations, a user poster display, commercial exhibitions, technical workshops and also an inspiring Student Assistantship Program. Paper Abstracts are now invited on any of the following tracks: (a) Environment & Natural Resources (b) Planning, Land Management & Economic Development (c) GIS Science, Technology & Education, Business Services (d) Transportation, Utilities & Public Works (e) Health & Public Safety. **Abstract submission deadline is 30 June.** For full conference details, contact eauc@esria.co.ke

SARETI: African Health Research Ethics Symposium 2006. The South African Research Ethics Training Initiative (SARETI) is an Africa-based research ethics training programme funded by the Fogarty International Center of the US National Institutes of Health. SARETI is currently in its fourth year of programme activity, with several Masters-level and fellowship students close to completing their degrees and training. In October this year, SARETI plans to host the first African Health Research Ethics Symposium (AHRES). The meeting will be held from Wed 11th to Fri 13th October 2006 at the Meridien Hotel in Dakar, Senegal. The medium of the meeting will be in English. We invite expressions of interest for the submission of papers and presentations at this SARETI symposium. The focus of AHRES will be the presentation of new research and scholarship on ethical issues in research in Africa, or by African researchers and scholars. Preference will be given to scholars or fellows of Fogarty International bioethics programmes. We will have several distinguished keynote speakers, each of whom will have expertise in African research ethics and developing country issues more generally. The remainder of the programme will be scholarly and research papers on aspects of research ethics in Africa. Although the focus will be on Africa, interested delegates from other countries will be welcome to apply to contribute. Interested colleagues are invited to Email Ms Debbie Marais maraisd@ukzn.ac.za to be kept on the mailing list as the programme develops. You may also indicate whether you would be interested in delivering a paper, and provide a 20-line abstract of your intended topic. For more information, see: <http://shsph.up.ac.za/sareti/sareti.htm>

6th African Association of Remote Sensing of the Environment (AARSE) Conference, Cairo, Egypt, 30 October—2 November 2006. Theme: Earth Observation & Geoinformation Sciences in Support of Africa's Development. For further information, visit <http://www.narss.sci.eg/aarse2006>. For information concerning AARSE go to: <http://www.itc.nl/~aarse/>. The AARSE conference is the largest gathering of remote sensing and GIS users in Africa. The conference is a premier forum in Africa which brings together scientists, practitioners, educators, developers and vendors and policy and decision makers to discuss advancements (Latest developments), applications, capacity building and promotion of geo-information technologies in sustainable development of Africa. It is a forum in which participants learn and exchange ideas on the latest advancements in the technologies and their applications in different fields. Strategies for promotion and use of the technologies in Africa are also discussed. **The last date to submit an abstract is 15 April 2006.** More than 1000 participants are expected under one umbrella.

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

Young Scientists' Global Change Conference 2006, Beijing, China, 2—8 November 2006. Applications: 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.

2ND ArcGIS WEST AFRICA USER CONFERENCE (AWAUC 2006), 8th – 9th 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

Global Environment Facility (GEF) funding received

The world's largest environmental funding body—Global Environment Facility (GEF) has received funding for a period of four years to a tune of US\$ 3.13 billion.

GEF Chief Executive Monique Babut disclosed this at the GEF general Assembly held along side the 2006 Enviromedia Conference in Cape Town, South Africa.

She said the funding will be used to fund environmentally friendly activities worldwide.

Babut explained that the US\$ 3.13 billion funding is biggest ever financial boost for the environmental funding body.

"This replenishment is the largest in the fifteen years history of the GEF and will be used to fund critical environmental programs in developing countries, including small projects by NGOs and community-based organizations" Babut.

She said 32 governments have agreed to contribute to finance environmental projects over the next four years.

The agreement was endorsed by the 32-member GEF Council in Cape Town where the fourth Third

GEF Assembly was held.

"This strong show of support from the international donor community is remarkable, and signals firm commitment to protecting the global environment," said Monique Babut, GEF CEO and Chairperson.

The GEF Chief executive observed that the funding comes at a crucial time when environmental degradation globally is increasing, and showing worrying signs of stress and severity.

"We cannot be complacent, and time is not on our side. The global environment is facing unprecedented threats, and these funds have to be translated rapidly into projects, programs and policies that make a difference in developing countries."

The GEF was established 15 years ago, coming out of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, to fund global environment protection projects.

World Bank, Vice President for Concessional Finance and Global Partnerships, Le Houerou Philippe, said the GEF is a unique facility which allows the international community to come together and coordinate real solutions for

the world's major environmental concerns.

"This new funding for the GEF will go a long way to provide cohesive and sustainable programs" said Philippe

He reaffirmed the world Banks' commitment of working with all GEF partners to implement the replenishment."

The 32 donors to this replenishment are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Portugal, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, and United States.

The GEF Trust Fund is replenished once every four years.

Submitted by Carlyn Hambuba

New Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa

The Rockefeller Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) are forming a new Alliance to improve agricultural productivity and the welfare of small scale farmers in the African continent through research funding and development work. To this aim, two organizations have been created: Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and Programs for a Green Revolution in Africa (ProGRA).

AGRA will contribute to poverty alleviation through agricultural development for resource poor farmers, while ProGRA will serve as a supporting organization for redistribution, to im-

prove the productivity and profitability of small-scale farming in Africa. The first major initiative of ProGRA will be a Program for Africa's Seed System (PASS) that will operate in 20 African countries.

"The original Green Revolution was a huge success in many parts of the world," said Judith Rodin, president of the Rockefeller Foundation. "Unfortunately, in Africa, while there are many positive efforts, momentum is going the other way. Over the past 15 years, the number of Africans living on less than a dollar a day has increased by 50 percent. Working with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

and with African leaders, farmers and scientists, we're committed to launching an African Green Revolution that will help tens of millions of people who are living on the brink of starvation in sub-Saharan Africa."

For more information visit: <http://www.rockfound.org/Agriculture/Announcement/218>. Read the complete press release at: <http://www.rockfound.org/Library/agra1.pdf>

Source: CropBiotech Newsletter 22 September 2006

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Opening a Digital Doorway for Africa's children

September 27, 2006 *Edition 1*

Di Caelers and Botho molosankwe

Give a child a computer and within seven days they'll have figured it out - without any training whatsoever.

This is what a joint initiative between the Department of Science and Technology and the Meraka Institute has proved.

"The results are mindblowing," says Grant Cambridge, engineering technologist for the Meraka Institute. "We go into

deep rural environments, bolt down the computers and leave them to it.

"We videotape the activities for later analysis of user patterns and we've seen that within an average seven days the children have got it taped."

Called the Digital Doorway, the project's broad aim is to boost computer literacy and associated skills in Africa.

Underpinning it is the idea of people's inherent cognitive ability to teach themselves com-

puter skills with minimal external intervention.

And that idea has proven a huge hit at Insite (the International Science Innovation and Technology Exhibition) at the Sandton Convention Centre, where the project has been one of the star exhibitions among the 70-odd displays.

Standing 2m high, the vandal-proof Digital Doorway is made up of three stations - each with a monitor, keyboard and mouse.

The computers have educa-

Opening a Digital Doorway for Africa's children (cont.)

tional programs and games, scientific software and applications for both adults and children.

Kim Gush of Meraka says the apparatus was put in rural and poor communities, where those who benefited learnt from being curious and at their own pace "as it is not like a teacher explaining it to you".

At Insite, which started on Sunday and closes today at 6pm, the exhibition made a big impression on Thandeka Mokoena, a Grade 10 pupil at Kwadedangedlele High School in Soweto.

The Digital Doorway exhibit was her favourite, because many people in her area of Zola, Soweto, are not computer-literate. "If they had this machine it would benefit them a lot as they do not have money to visit Internet cafés or they are far from the libraries that have computers," she said.

There are 24 Doorways installed in South Africa, with a further 50 being planned.

They are accessible to the community 24 hours a day.

The first was launched at the end of 2002 in Cwili in Kei Mouth in the Eastern Cape, and it was there, Cambridge says, that analysis showed the computers were being used seven days a week, between 4am and midnight. The youngest user was 5, and the oldest in his 80s.

In Slovoville, south of Soweto, they installed one in a community centre with a crèche next door.

"By the time the researcher got there the children had turned a

step on its side so they could reach the keyboard, and were painting pictures with Touch Paint. These are children who know nothing about icons or even what a cursor is," he says.

The focus of the project is to bridge the digital divide and to get people comfortable with technology.

Project leader Ronel Smith says it utilises the concept of minimally invasive education as an alternative for promoting wide-scale computer literacy, a concept pioneered by Indian professor Sugata Mitra, who put a computer in a hole in the wall of his building, offering access to the children living in the adjacent slum.

Within seven to 14 days, the children had worked out how to access the Internet, run programs and play games.

"We want to verify, in the South African context, the results of that Indian research which indicates that children possess the cognitive ability to acquire functional computer skills without formal training," Smith says.

What's envisaged is a sustainable network of at least 1 000 Digital Doorways throughout the country, reaching even the most remote areas.

Each one acts not only as a tool for developing computer literacy, but also as a source of information on a range of subjects. The content includes educational games and programmes, an introduction to computer terminology, scientific software, 10 000 books from project Gutenberg, a snapshot of Wikipedia, along with numerous other applications geared

for adults and children.

Initial analyses of information gathering by the CCTV camera included:

- The age of users ranges from primary school children, to young and older adults.
- Group sizes vary from four to 12.
- Previously computer-literate users become the "leaders" of the various groupings.
- Typical visits are between 30 minutes to an hour.
- Co-operative learning is common, with peer learning turning competitive among the younger children, but more collaborative for adults.
- Children appeared content to explore until they achieved the desired outcome, rather than ask for help.

Source: The Star

SALB project - looking for examples of use

The SALB project might have been useful to you in the context of your respective activities.

If this is the case, then SALB does now need your help !

They are looking for some additional real examples of who is using the information produced by the SALB project, and what specific problems they are addressing with the data.

This does not need to be under the form of a long text but more of a short quotation like the ones that you can find in the guest book page on the SALB project web site:

http://www3.who.int/whosis/gis/salb/salb_guestbook.htm.

[b/salb_guestbook.htm](http://www3.who.int/whosis/gis/salb/salb_guestbook.htm).

In addition to know if SALB is answering your needs, these quotation might also help them obtaining some precious funding for the continuity of this activity.

Please send the quotation that you might have directly to Steeve Ebener as soon as possible. His details follow:

Project Manager
eHealth
World Health Organization
20, AV. Appia
1211 Geneva 27

Phone: +41 22/ 791.47.44

Fax : +41 22/ 791.48.06

AccessMod:
<http://www.who.int/kms/initiatives/accessmod/en/index.html>

SALB:
http://www3.who.int/whosis/gis/salb/salb_home.htm

WHO WHS:
<http://www.who.int/healthinfo/survey/en/>

Bioethanol to Take Root in South Africa

Ethanol Africa plans to construct eight bioethanol factories in South Africa, the first of which will open next year. The company, formed by a group of farmers and agronomists, is already exploring the possibility of building ethanol factories in countries like Angola and Zambia.

"Africans have the potential to be-

come the Arabs of the biofuel industry," Chief Executive Johan Hoffman says. Bioethanol can help South Africa by providing farm and factory jobs, and ensuring a stable market for maize, sugar, and other commodities. Ethanol Africa said it hoped to source 30% of its maize from small-scale farmers and buy whatever they brought for sale at prices set before the planting sea-

son, ensuring a steady income for farmers.

Read the complete news article at <http://www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=55584>. Find out more at <http://www.ethanol-africa.com/>.

Source: *Crop Biotech Newsletter*
22 September 2006

Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research Virtual Library (CGVlibrary)

The CGVlibrary offers instant access to the leading research on agriculture, hunger, poverty, and the environment. From just one search engine, tap into leading agricultural information databases, including the online libraries of all the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) cen-

ters. Use the CGVlibrary to discover resources, read full text of thousands of publications, and stay current on CGIAR and other research.

More info. . .
<http://vlibrary.cgiar.org/V?RN=789697197>

Source: *IFPRI Newsletter*

Ethiopia: Fears of More Flooding

The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) has warned of further flooding across Ethiopia in coming months after the country experienced the worst floods in its history last month. At least 647 people died and thousands were made homeless.

In an appeal to donors on Tuesday, the IFRC warned that these "unprecedented" floods might continue in some parts of the country. "Although floods in many parts of Ethiopia are a yearly phenomenon, the magnitude of the current flooding is considered unprecedented," the IFRC said in the appeal. "Given the fact that the rainy season in some parts of Ethiopia, particularly South Omo, normally only starts in September and runs until the end of October, it is expected that the flooding situation in some areas will deteriorate further."

Forecasters have warned that the country is likely to face further floods from the rains that are expected to continue until the end of the rainy season in September. Preliminary reports and statistics gathered by the Ethiopian Government Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Agency (DPPA) indicate substantial losses of livestock, severe losses and/or damage to crops, and a serious health risks to animals, the IFRC said.

"The scope of the disaster therefore continues to unfold, but the impact is clear in terms of lives lost, infrastructure damaged, livelihoods affected, and basic coping mechanisms stretched," the organisation said.

Most of the affected are agro-pastoralists who sought refuge in the nearest safe zones, hoping to return to their pastures and farms as soon as the waters receded, according to the IFRC.

Meanwhile, a committee of artists has started raising US \$14,000 for the victims after showing English Premiership football matches on a giant screen in the capital, Addis Ababa. Football fans paid 35 cents each to watch the Chelsea-Liverpool and Arsenal-Manchester games.

"We have collected about 120,000 birr (\$14,264) after people paid to watch the football games on a big screen on Meskel square on Sunday," said Okubay Berhe, chairman of the committee for the flood victims.

"Despite heavy rain, we managed to gather 40,000 people."

The committee, made up of artists, musicians, publishers and advertising companies, hopes to raise 12 million Birr to help feed the homeless and rebuild houses and schools for the flood victims across the country, the organisers say.

"Sundays match was just the first part of our fundraising

programme. After six or eight weeks we will organise a big music festival to raise the rest of the 12 million Birr we need," Okubay added. The committee, called "Your compatriots are on your side" in Amharic, also plans to organise a football match between Ethiopian teams and to sell T-shirts to raise money.

Across Ethiopia, the number of people affected by the floods has reached 357,000, including 136,528 forced to abandon their homes, according to the United Nations.

The World Food Program has given out more than 2,500 metric tonnes of food assistance for the flood victims in various parts of the country, the organisation said in a statement.

Ethiopian authorities have appealed for \$27 million in funds to deal with the disaster, which struck first in the east in early August and then hit the southwest.

Source: <http://allafrica.com>

Biodiversity Strategy in Angola emphasises the role of environmental education

The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Angola was approved recently by the Council of Ministers of Angola. This Strategy aims at incorporating measures for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and fair and equitable sharing of biological resources into development policies and programmes for the benefit of all Angolans.

This Strategy states that the success of conservation efforts depends on the understanding and the participation of all Angolans, particularly through environmental education processes. One of the Strategic Areas of this Strategy

focuses on activities to promote and support Education for Sustainable Development.

One of its objectives is to develop methods and approaches on Education for Sustainable Development in order to guarantee conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in Angola. A number of activities are proposed to achieve such objective and it includes mainstreaming of environmental education into all biodiversity conservation programmes as well as to develop new contextually relevant approaches to education for sustainable development in Angola.

To obtain a copy of the Angolan National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan or more information on biodiversity in Angola contact the management Unit at nbsap.angola@nexus.ao.

Source: Vlady Russo, EEMail NewsFlash

Scientific Data for Decision Making Toward Sustainable Development: Senegal River Basin Case Study (cont.)

African science and technology data programs and an opportunity to initiate collaboration in various related areas.

Prior to the workshop there was a one-day site visit to the Diama Dam on the Senegal River, as well as to the Organisation pour la Mise en Valeur du Fleuve Sénégal (Senegal River Authority) Regional Documentation Center and the Université Gaston Berger, both in Saint-Louis, Senegal. Many of the research activities and training opportunities related to the Senegal River basin are conducted at the university. There was a half-day site visit the following day to the Centre de Suivi Ecologique (Ecological Monitoring Center) in Dakar, which develops, archives, and manages most of the country's ecological and environmental data and information resources.

It is hoped that this workshop contributed to the capabilities for sustainable development in West Africa by identifying and reviewing scientific data activities that could help managers in different sectors, policy makers, and citizens to make better-informed decisions about the Senegal River basin area. The workshop and this resulting publication are intended to foster com-

munication and interaction among a number of interested groups at the local and regional levels.

The primary audience includes scientists, data managers, educators, and senior decision makers from the government, nongovernmental organizations, and industry sectors who are working in Senegal and the West African region, as well as their counterparts in the United States who have similar interests in that area. A secondary but also very important audience includes similar categories of individuals in other African nations and in other developing countries outside Africa who are concerned with using scientific data for improved decision making in sustainable development activities, particularly relating to river systems.

This report also is available online via the National Academies Press Web site, and includes hyperlinks where available to organizations and data sources identified during the course of the workshop. Links to individual workshop presentations where available can be found through the U.S. National Committee's Web site at <http://www7.nationalacademies.org/us-nc-codata/Senegal%20Workshop>

.html and on the Senegal National Committee's Web site at <http://www.codata.sn/>

Source: Dr. Donat Agosti, Science Consultant, Research Associate, American Museum of Natural History and Naturmuseum der Burgergemeinde Bern

Request for Contractor



GEO Secretariat: 7 bis, avenue de la Paix • Case postale 2300 • CH-1211 Geneva 2 • Switzerland
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REQUEST FOR CONTRACTOR: Deadline for applications: 6 October 2006

The GEO Secretariat requires a contractor for short-term support for its 2006-2007 Outreach and Communication activities in the following areas:

1. Support the development and refinement of the GEO outreach campaign, in particular the strategy for materials development.
2. Work with the Director, appropriate Secretariat staff, and in-kind donors as necessary to develop the materials of the GEO Outreach campaign, based on the GEO campaign messages and current GEO visual identity (logo and website). This will be done in collaboration with printing and audio/video production services of in-kind donors, and will include, but is not limited to, the creation of the following:
 - a. A two to four page print brochure outlining the basic concepts of GEOSS;
 - b. General fact sheets and talking points for each societal benefit area;
 - c. A set of GEO exhibition panels;
 - d. An international public service announcement (PSA);
 - e. A promotional general video, appropriate for general use and for educators; including storyboard development.
3. Work with the GEO web development manager to increase the quality of the available content and developing new promotional and informational content, including the identification of items of interest to be published in the "GEO News" area of the GEO website.
4. Working with the public affairs and press officers of GEO Members and Participating Organizations, develop the GEO Press Network Concept—a cadre of press officers that will facilitate placement of feature articles and stories in a number of key media outlets.
5. Assist in developing general and specific story ideas and a press-pitch strategy, based on the general message and the high-profile initiatives of the GEO outreach campaign.
6. Assist in organizing press events at key GEO meetings and regional events, providing liaison with local reporters from the Associated Press, Reuters, and regional media outlets.
7. Other duties as assigned.

Qualifications and attributes:

- § Demonstrated experience (5 to 7 years) in developing effective and creative multimedia communication materials (audio, visual, print, online media), including for international audiences;
- § Experience in media relations or communications in a public affairs environment;
- § Demonstrated ability to synthesize and present complex scientific and technical issues;
- § Bachelors in communications, journalism, marketing, public relations, or related field;
- § Strong organizational skills and the ability to think strategically;
- § Excellent verbal and written communication skills, with native or near-native fluency in English; knowledge of French desirable.

Duration of contract: The contract will be for a period of 6 months, based in Geneva, and is renewable for an additional 5 months.

Remuneration: Between USD 5,800 and USD 6,900 per month to be decided in accordance with qualifications and previous experience.

Starting date: 1 November 2006

Application Procedure:

Interested parties should apply via email to the GEO Secretariat: secretariat@geosec.org submitting the following no later than 6 October 2006:

1. Letter of interest addressed to Secretariat Director José Achache;
2. CV/resume;
3. Example of previous work;
4. Three professional references.

Interesting Sites

African Lakes Atlas link:
www.na.unep.net

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

Action Aid International: Project data on food, HIV/AIDS, emergencies, studies on women and girls, climate changes, capacity building for farmers and communities, harvests: <http://www.actionaid.org>.

2010 FIFA World Cup

The government of South Africa has embarked on an ambitious plan to boost public transport in the run up to the 2010 FIFA World Cup to be held in that country.

The multi-million dollar Public Transport Infrastructure Fund initiative will be implemented with financial support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the United Nations.

The funds in this initiative will among other things be used to upgrade bus and rail services in time for the opening whistle in the 2010 World Cup Soccer match..

The initiative also aims to deliver mass transit alternatives to car commuting. It is designed to leave a lasting legacy that will modernize urban travel for millions of people well after the final whistle blows and the tournament has come and gone.

Chief Executive Officer of the GEF, Monique Barbut, said the project assesses how to bring even greater environmental benefits to the government-led plan was underway.

"We share the South African Government's aspirations on this score and agree that the 2010 FIFA World Cup represents a great opportunity to lay out a 21st century, sustainable transport, network that will have impacts in 2010 and for many years to come," she added.

"We will be looking to the private sector, from bus to fuel compa-

nies, to partner with the GEF and the Government of South Africa in this exciting venture. In doing so we hope to catalyze even greater backing in cash, in kind and in expertise," added Ms. Barbut.

The project is looking at developing pilot projects in some of the nine South African World Cup cities. These will be aimed at developing sustainable transport alternatives that deliver greenhouse gas reductions above and beyond those currently planned.

It is hoped to develop one project to demonstrate the benefits of alternative fuels and technologies like bio-diesel, bio-ethanol and fuel cells.

Another one, possibly in one of the smaller venue cities, would demonstrate how well-designed cycle ways and pedestrian routes feeding into the bus network can offer a rapid and attractive alternative to the private car.

Ms Barbut, whose organization manages a \$3 billion fund that provides the biggest source of environment grants to developing countries, said: "Well designed, well run, and sensibly planned public transport can play a key role on cutting climate change emissions. It can also help to improve local air quality and bridge social and economic divides."

And Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and Executive Director of the UN Environment

Programme (UNEP), said: "Preliminary results indicate that the Green Goal in Germany, in which UNEP was involved, led to some 70 per cent of fans taking public transport or using alternative modes such as cycling or walking to get to and from matches."

"There were also significant achievements in areas such as energy savings, rainwater harvesting and waste minimization at stadia.

Overall the Green Goal demonstrated that mass audience participation events can be entertaining and can also leave a positive and lasting environmental and economic legacy.

UNEP and its 2006 partners stand ready to assist the government, cities and Local Organizing Committee to score further green goals in South Africa in 2010," he added.

Submitted by Carlyn Hambuba

Upcoming Events (cont.)

Meeting our millennium challenge goals: Transport, Agriculture, *et al*

Technical workshops, map gallery, raffle draw and more available, visit 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

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). 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>.

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;

Upcoming events (cont.)

* 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.

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

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/>

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 for future updates and online registration for delegates and potential presenters.

Forestry

Oslo - Forests in northern nations such as Russia and Canada are worth \$250 billion (about R1,8-trillion) a year because of services they provide by purifying water or soaking up greenhouse gases, a researcher said on Tuesday.

Mark Anielski, an ecological economist based in Edmonton, Canada, urged governments to follow suit and place value on natural services rather than go on treating them as free.

"We only realise what nature is worth when it's gone," he told Reuters of a study he presented to a forestry congress in Canada about the value of forests in Alaska, Russia, the Nordic nations and Canada.

'We only realise what nature is worth when it's gone'

It estimated that services provided by intact forests in filtering water and waste, providing habitats for animals and plants, capturing greenhouse gases and attracting tourists were worth about \$250-billion a year.

He said his estimates ranged from \$145-\$300 billion.

"This natural capital should be in the balance sheets of nations," he said.

Such valuations would help preserve forests, for instance, and discourage logging of trees that were not replaced by new plantings. Trees store carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas blamed for global warming, as they grow.

The study estimated that environmental services provided by Canada's forests alone were worth about CAN\$93-billion (US\$83 billion) a year and that each hectare of forest was worth CAN\$16 (US\$143.4).

"If these ecosystem services were counted in Canada, they would amount to roughly 9 percent of GDP," he said. Countries including Sweden, Austria, Switzerland, Greece and Algeria have annual gross domestic product (GDP) of around \$250-billion.



EIS-AFRICA

Postnet Suite No: 156
Private Bag X 15
Menlo Park
0102
South Africa

Phone: +27 12 349 1068
Fax: +27 12 349 2080
Email: svorster@eis-africa.org

***A network for the co-operative
management of environmental information***

www.eis-africa.org

October Newsletter

Any contributions, which are welcomed, must reach us by 23 October 2006. Contributions can be sent to svorster@eis-africa.org.

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Forestry (cont.)

Under conventional accounting, governments can spur short-term GDP growth by axing forests for building materials or pulp. The valuations suggested by Anielski would show up longer-term risks, ranging from erosion to loss of habitats.

Other scientists are also trying to put values on natural services, ranging from mangroves to peat marshes.

A UN report in January, for instance, said that coral reefs were worth \$1 000-6 000 per hectare per year - because of services ranging from fisheries to tourism. Some scientists question the validity of assumptions underlying such estimates.

Anielski said forests could also help to counter global warming, widely blamed on a build-up of heat-trapping gases emitted by burning fossil fuels in factories, power plants and cars.

"The forests and peatlands store an estimated 67 billion tonnes of carbon in Canada alone," he said, adding this was almost eight times the amount of carbon produced by human activities worldwide in 2000.

Source: IOL Online
