

UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS

Faculty of Agriculture

Minutes of the 1st meeting of the Committee for IYPE (International Year of Planet Earth) held on 4th February 2008 in the Conference Room of the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Mauritius, Reduit.

Members

Assoc Prof. Dr. B. Lalljee, Head of Dept (AFS), UoM – Chairman

Assoc Prof. Dr. S. Facknath, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Mauritius

Assoc Prof. Dr. M. Nowbuth, Faculty of Engineering, University of Mauritius

Ms. T. Gujadhur, Ministry of Environment

Mr. R. K. Foolmaun, Ministry of Environment

Representative of Mauritius Research Council (MRC) – Apologies

Representative of Meteorological Office – Apologies

Representative of Agricultural Research & Extension Unit – Apologies

Representative of National Parks & Conservation Service – Apologies

Chairman opened the meeting at 11.45 am and welcomed members present.

He explained the background of the meeting and the principles and role of the International Year of Planet Earth (IYPE). Chairman also stated that the present Committee would be the national committee for the IYPE, and would act as the focal point for IYPE. He gave members printouts of the pages from the IYPE website, and explained that IYPE has two main aspects – the Science aspect and the Outreach aspect. Members discussed about the various themes and how Mauritius could contribute to this important project and also what where the possible benefits we could derive.

He informed members that the International Society for IYPE had been ratified by many Governments, and that over a hundred countries have already formed their respective national committees while others are in the process of doing so. Chairman stressed that small island states are particularly susceptible to environmental changes, and hence every effort should be made to network with associations dealing with environmental issues.

As regards the Science aspect, Chairman explained that the Science aspect includes, *inter alia* funding of research projects of 2-3 years duration, while the Outreach component includes sensitization and awareness campaigns.

Members stated that most people in Mauritius are not aware of the effects and consequences of climate change and other related issues such as land slide, flooding, tsunamis, cyclones, drought, erosion, etc.

The Committee also decided that a nation wide sensitization campaign needs to be carried out together with other institutions/ organizations dealing with similar matters.

The Chairman suggested that NGOs should form an integral part of our network. Following discussions among members, some of the possible projects identified for the coming year were :

1. Holding of a National Workshop on Geohazards in Small Island Developing States (SIDS);
2. A series of talks (with interactive computer displays) on topical environmental issues such as cyclones, land slides, flooding, tsunamis, drought, erosion, etc.
3. Elocution/ debate contests on national television on environmental topics/ geohazards by University students;
4. Preparation of publicity materials for geohazard sensitisation;
5. Information campaign and encouragement to young scientist for preparation of project proposals to be funded by IYPE;
6. Contest for preparation of pamphlets/ posters on specified geohazard topics relevant to Mauritius;
7. Contest for preparation of models/ projects on relevant topics by secondary school students.

It was agreed that all members would submit a list of various committees dealing with environmental issues in their respective organisations/ institutions with the aim of bringing about synergy among organisations/ institutions, avoiding duplication and eventually setting up a well –organised network of scientists, academics, civil society bodies, and other interested people.

One member suggested that this could be set up in the form of a database on the University of Mauritius website.

One member proposed that the Water Resources Unit should be invited in the next meeting. Another member suggested that the Mauritius Oceanography Institute should also be invited to form part of this Committee.

These two proposals were unanimously approved.

All members unanimously agreed that the focal point for the national committee for the Mauritian IYPE will be the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Mauritius, and that the Chairman and contact person would be Assoc Prof Dr. B. Lalljee, with Assoc Prof Dr. S. Facknath as Secretary. All members pledged to make this committee active and visible.

Chairman thanked members for their attendance and contribution, and informed members that the next meeting would be held at the end of February or early March.