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creating a balanced, sustainable future for both. Recent declines in funding for the earth sciences, and in student enrolment, mean that we must make public and political awareness a top priority. Although 2007 will be the officially designated Year, activities will begin in 2005, and efforts are underway to raise 20 million Euros to be divided equally between research and outreach that will bring the message of the Year home to billions of people world wide. A web site has been developed at www.esfs.org, and a prospectus and flier, Planet Earth in our Hands, has been published. Selected themes provide the Year with an initial focus, and planning will respond to the demands of the community. Outreach is especially important, as the public, policy makers, and politicians commonly make decisions about our changing environment without adequate knowledge and understanding of Earth history, materials, and processes. Themes have been chosen for their societal impact, potential for outreach, multidisciplinary nature, and high scientific potential. Fliers for each of the priority themes have been or will be published, including groundwater sustainability, hazards, public health, climate, resources, urban geology, Earth systems, oceans, soils, and life.

Peter Johnson of University of Ottawa and Chair of the Canadian Polar Commission outlined plans for the International Polar Year (IPY) 2007-2008, envisioned as an intense, internationally coordinated campaign that will initiate the dawn of a new era in polar science. The IPY will be multi- and interdisciplinary in scope and truly international in participation. It will educate and excite the public, and help train the next generation of engineers, scientists, and leaders. It will include elements from a wide range of scientific disciplines. International themes include:

1. determination of the present polar environmental status,
2. quantification and understanding of past and present environmental and human change in the polar regions in order to improve projections of future changes,
3. advancement of our understanding on all scales of the links and interactions between polar regions and the rest of the globe and of the processes

controlling these,

4. investigation of the frontiers of science in the polar regions,
5. use of the unique vantage point of the polar regions to develop and enhance observatories from the interior of the Earth to the Sun and the cosmos beyond,
6. investigation of the cultural, historical, and social processes that shape the sustainability of circumpolar human societies, and identification of their unique contributions to global cultural diversity and citizenship.

Canada intends to promote emphasis on the human dimension of the IPY. Leadership in northern communities is being sought, and the emphasis will be on the legacy left by the program, including capacity building, infrastructure, education, traditional knowledge, monitoring, information dissemination, and archiving.

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