



THE YEAR OF GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING

Four international science organisations took the stage at the first day of the World Social Science Forum 2015 in Durban to proclaim the 2016 International Year of Global Understanding (IYGU).

The International Social Science Council, International Council for Science, International Geographical Union and International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences, together with UNESCO launched the IYGU as a platform or tool to draw attention to major issues and to encourage international action as a direct answer to concerns of global importance.

Professor Benno Werlen of Germany, Executive Director of the IYGU, opened the session with a look at the overall objective and roadmap for 2016 IYGU. His remarks defined the mandate of the organisation: The scientific community has to prepare scientific knowledge that is easily accessible for use by everyone in daily living.

By Nazareen Ebrahim

Prof Werlen further explained that, “the IYGU will act to bridge social and natural sciences, to understand how local and global is interconnected, and to move from knowing about sustainability to living sustainably.”

The declaration of 2016 IYGU was further supported and presented by ISSC President Prof Alberto Martinelli, ICSU Executive Director Dr Heide Hackmann and CIPSH’s Prof Luiz Oosterbeek.

Prof Martinelli further emphasised the significance of 2016 IYGU saying that, “If we want to reach global sustainability, we need to take into account cultural differences, and we need to find adapted ways of living to the natural condition. Every action is socially and culturally embedded. Local traditions have a global impact.”

His address was followed by the declaration of fostering great partnership and relations through the IYGU by ICSU’s Dr Hackmann who said this platform allows

scientific voices to be represented across the world.

Prof Oosterbeek concluded the declaration by answering why the IYGU is needed. He explained that, “there is a growing divide between people’s perceptions of their needs and their own understanding of nature of global process, and the relevance of sciences in this context.”

The IYGU organisation will comprise patrons, a steering committee, task force, outreach and media education, regional action centres, a scientific panel, youth and gender networks and goodwill ambassadors.

South Africa is one of only four countries on the African continent that is an IYGU member. Prof Werlen in response to an audience question about participation of non-member countries, explained that knowledge and dedicated outcomes from 2016 IYGU will be communicated through global science partners and online platforms for public consumption and dialogue.