



The full text of items on this page — and further details and background information about the Unesco/ICSU World Conference on Science, to be held in Budapest from 26 June to 1 July — can be found on *Nature's* website at <http://www.nature.com>

## Internet gateway is planned to help women in science

[LONDON] An Internet-based gateway for women in science is to be officially launched at the World Conference on Science. The Gender, Science and Technology Gateway is a web-based clearing house of information, case studies and resources on gender and science and technology for sustainable development.

The gateway is a project of the Gender Advisory Board of the UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development in collaboration with the Once and Future Action Network (OFAN).

The advisory board is hoping to improve the flow of information to decision-makers on gender, science and technology. Secretariats in Indonesia and Montevideo are creating the gateway to disseminate relevant knowledge to developing countries, and to others wanting to gain access to the website.

The site will be hosted by Women in Global Science and Technology, a group working to improve global networking among women scientists and technologists on critical issues for development.

A 'virtual pavilion' — which will highlight activities around the world in gender, science and technology — is also being arranged for the conference by OFAN. The pavilion will include computer terminals with web access.

The project's organizers hope the pavilion will highlight women's contributions in science to researchers, agencies and donors.

See also: <http://helix.nature.com/wcs/a38.html>

## Science partnerships 'must be of benefit to all sides'

[LONDON] Poor countries often learn little from international research partnerships that are linked to the priorities of the developed country, or are dominated by its researchers, according to a report from a Netherlands development think-tank.

In contrast, they can gain much from North-South research networks that offer clear benefits to all participants, and not just developing-country partners, says the report from the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM).

The report adds that the most successful partnerships are self-funded, either through membership fees or income from contract work, and do not rely unduly on support from aid agencies. It recommends that North-South research activities could learn from the experience of successful research partnerships between developing countries.

It also points out that research partnerships have been slow to use the Internet to share information, partly because Internet connections in some of the poorest countries are not well developed.

The report's authors are Louk Box, director of ECDPM, and Rutger Engelhard, an independent consultant. They wrote it for a meeting of the Geneva-based United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development last month.

More effective research partnerships is one of several priority areas on which the commission is working. Others include biotechnology for development and a 'vision

statement' on the future of science and technology for development.

The report recommends that research partnerships should be organized around a common scientific interest that provides researchers from developed countries with a stimulating intellectual challenge, but is also "strongly embedded in the Southern social, economic and cultural context".

For example, the European Tropical Forest Research Network, established by the European Commission in 1991, contributes to the conservation of forests. But it also enables scientists to exchange information on tropical forestry research.

"The identification of a concrete, widely shared problem or goal is one of the key pillars supporting networks," says the report. "Networks that fail to develop such a focus do not survive their infant years."

In addition, the report says that Southern partners need to be involved in the management of the research. In return, Southern members must give a "strong commitment" to making the partnership a success.

The report says much has improved since the 1960s and 1970s, when donor agencies from the richer countries engaged in scientific collaboration largely "to implement their own agendas". But it says that changes are difficult to bring about within existing partnerships as "Southern partners are often insufficiently organized to collectively assess their needs and present their agendas".

Full text: <http://helix.nature.com/wcs/a37.html>

## Why the South needs the North to help set up research networks

[TRIESTE, ITALY] Scientists from Northern countries should actively help their colleagues in the South to work together in developing the networks and research infrastructure needed to increase their scientific capabilities, according to José I. Vargas, Brazil's minister of science and technology between 1992 and 1998.

Vargas, who is president of the Third World Academy of Sciences and the Third World Network of Scientific Organizations, says that such 'Southernization' of the North's scientific agenda is likely to be the most effective way to tackle problems such as climate change and food production, and to ensure that advanced science is brought to bear on the problems of poorer nations.

"Scientists in the North do not have to



look far beyond their laboratories to realize that global scientific knowledge is far more evenly distributed than the enormous wealth that scientists and

technologists have created through their efforts," says Vargas. "Many of the North's graduate schools in basic sciences would find it difficult to maintain current levels of scholarship and research without a steady flow of graduate students from abroad."

He points out that 'South-South' cooperation has become one of the guiding principles of science and technology policy throughout the developing world. "Such efforts could be significantly strengthened

through programmes that facilitate North-South cooperation — provided that Northern scientists are responsive to the issues raised by colleagues in the South, and that scientists in the South share knowledge they have gained with their counterparts throughout the developing world."

He cites the way that Brazil was able to use scientific assistance from the United States to set up its space programme — and now not only uses satellite technology to tackle issues ranging from atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations to soil and water quality, but also shares the information gathered from satellites with scientists in other developing countries.

Full text: <http://helix.nature.com/wcs/c19.html>

See also: <http://helix.nature.com/wcs/c18.html>