

# CELEBRATING A COMMON VISION



MARTIN LIPMAN

International cooperation, the inspiration of a new generation of polar scientists and world citizens, and the need to further the global understanding of climate change, were universal themes expressed by countries around the world at the launch of the International Polar Year (IPY) on 1 March.

The official International Opening Ceremony of the IPY took place at the Palais de la Découverte science museum in Paris. Hosted by the co-sponsors of the IPY – the International Council for Science and the World Meteorological Organisation – the ceremony included a press conference, exhibits and a live webcast from both poles. Executive Director of the International Council for Science, Dr Thomas Rosswall, highlighted the internationally collaborative and ambitious nature of the IPY.

'In comparison with previous polar years we have planned a broader programme involving all the relevant disciplines, from both natural and social sciences. The IPY is an excellent example of strengthening international science for the benefit of society,' he said.

Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) glaciologist and IPY Joint Committee Co-Chair, Dr Ian Allison, also spoke on the scientific, collaborative and human legacies arising from the IPY, including new and improved observing systems, better methods of information exchange, and increasing public awareness of polar issues.

In Australia, the Minister for the Department of the Environment and Water Resources, Malcolm Turnbull, spoke to the AAD via a video link from Canberra, on the importance of the polar regions

*Members of the Turtle Island Tourism Group perform at the IPY launch in Canada.*



JACOB HALASKA

A 1500 m<sup>3</sup> helium-filled weather balloon was launched as part of Sweden's IPY opening ceremony.

in the global climate system and the need to further our understanding of this system.

'There are still large gaps in our knowledge and many crucial questions to be answered to help us prepare for the climate change challenges ahead,' he said.

'The International Polar Year, the largest international polar research programme for 50 years, could not be better timed with global climate a key issue around the world.'

AAD Chief Scientist, Professor Michael Stoddart, also outlined the four AAD-led IPY projects: the Census of Antarctic Marine Life, Aliens in Antarctica, Taking the Antarctic Arctic Polar Pulse, and Solar Linkages to Atmospheric Processes.

Questacon, Australia's National Science and Technology Centre, launched Project IGLO (International Action on Global Warming) in the Asia Pacific region. The project aims to raise awareness of climate change and is the result of collaboration between international science centres and museums.

The Royal Society of Victoria in Melbourne hosted a day-long symposium involving past and present Antarctic expeditioners, scientists and secondary school students. The Society expects to coordinate a voyage during the IPY, giving year 11 science students a taste of scientific research in Antarctica.

Students and teachers in Australia and around the world were also encouraged to join in the 1 March celebrations with a range of activities including experiments with ice, snow and water, and launching a virtual balloon.

Earlier in the week, at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, policy makers and leading scientists discussed how the international scientific community would work together during the IPY to address the threat of climate change and explain why polar science is crucial to understanding how the world works. More than 24 European nations are taking part in the IPY, investing some AUD\$325 million in IPY science, education and outreach projects.

'The polar regions are vital arenas for science, foreign policy, trade, energy and security,' said Professor Carlo-Alberto Ricci, Chairman of the European Polar Board. 'International Polar Year is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Europe to deepen and broaden international partnerships and create trust and mutual understanding through political and scientific dialogue.'

The UK celebrated its launch at the Royal Society in London in the presence of Her Royal Highness Princess Anne. Speakers at the launch noted the need to address the uncertainties highlighted in the Stern Review and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report on the contribution of the polar regions to future climate change and sea level rise.

At the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, US, 400 people gathered to view a video on the polar regions and a polar art exhibition, while a panel of polar scientists provided an in-depth discussion of ongoing and new research. A month earlier, scientists at the South Pole had kicked off the US IPY effort by collecting the first test observations of a new telescope – initially aimed at Jupiter. Researchers from nine institutions will use the telescope to



MERRYN MCKINNON - QUESTACON

In Canberra, Questacon's Manager of Education and Research, Merryn McKinnon, welcomes guests to the launch of the IPY and Project IGLO.



JOHN GILLIES

Former Australian Antarctic Division Director, Dr Phillip Law, cuts an IPY cake at the Royal Society of Victoria launch event.



MATHEW OAKES

Staff and guests of the Australian Antarctic Division celebrate the IPY launch.

unravel the fundamental mysteries of modern cosmology and the nature of the universe.

Celebrations continued throughout March across some 20 nations including Denmark, Sweden, Argentina, Germany, Canada, Japan and Spain. Details of the events in other countries can be found at [www.ipy.org](http://www.ipy.org) and [www.arcticportal.org](http://www.arcticportal.org).

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