

ciated regional conferences and continue to produce regular field guides.

In addition, the Tectonic and Structural Geology as well as the Earth Sciences History Group have edited special issues of international journals viz: 'Tectonophysics', 'Journal of Structural Geology' and 'Earth Sciences History'.

Every specialist group communicates with its members via a regular newsletter.

### Honours and awards

One of the major contributions of the Society has become the recognition of individual contributions within the geological sciences.

Three of the Society's original Honorary Members have subsequently been further recognised in the F.L. Stillwell Award, W.R. Browne Medal and the Mawson Lecture.

From 1979, the W.R. Browne Medal has been awarded for distinguished services to geological sciences in Australia. The first recipient was foundation President E.S. Hills. The Stillwell Award is awarded for the best paper, published in any one year in the Journal. It was first awarded to B.E. Hobbs in

1966. A Mawson Lecture was first given at the Australian Geological Convention by B.N. Rustrnegar in 1981.

Since 1990, the Society has created additional awards in specific geological specialities. The S.W. Carey Medal, since 1992, has been awarded to a person distinguished in the field of tectonics (inaugural recipient J.J. Veevers), whilst the Joe Harms Medal has been awarded since 1994 in recognition of exploration excellence and ore deposit discovery. The first recipient was J.E. Harms.

These national awards have also been complemented by awards and commemorative lectures in most Divisions as well as the Economic Geology and Tectonics and Structural Geology Specialist Groups.

### Conclusion

The Geological Society of Australia has trod an energetic pathway since its first tentative beginnings 50 years ago.

Today the Society is a significant professional organisation with assets totalling more than \$A1 million and an annual income exceeding \$A300,000. It ranks as one of the

largest geoscience organisations in the southern hemisphere.

The current President of the Geological Society of Australia is Dr John Foden, University of Adelaide, john.foden@adelaide.edu.au; and the Honorary Secretary is Dr Patrick James, patrick.james@adelaide.edu.au. The Society's office can be contacted at misha@gsa.org.au whilst the Society's website is [www.gsa.org.au](http://www.gsa.org.au).

This article is a synopsis of a larger paper prepared for the Society's 50th anniversary by Dr Barry Cooper from the Society's Earth Sciences History Group and published as a supplement to 'The Australian Geologist' Newsletter 123.

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## Global interaction of science, technology and policy

In the last few years, the United Nations, through its multiple commissions, committees and other organisations, has contributed towards moulding the current situation and the possible evolution of scientific and technical knowledge on a global scale as well as its transfer mechanisms for development. Two large international meetings have recently set out the foundations for this: The World Conference on Science held in Budapest three years ago, which was organised by UNESCO with the co-operation of the International Council for Science, and the Conference of Trade and Development (UNCTAD-X), which was held in Bangkok in February 2000. Both conferences agreed to draw up Declarations where the principal directives to follow were recommended: the Declaration on Science and the Use of Scientific Knowledge and the "United Spirit of the Bangkok Agreement".

These large meetings have helped to establish the principal means of achieving wider and improved access to "knowledge" for everyone, incorporating the necessary components of development and technological transfer, which are vital for any adaptation to the needs and economies of each country. However, they have also highlighted the tremendous differences and inequalities which exist, and which lead some countries to almost continually ask for aid and concrete action and others to promote the protection of their economic interests. Therefore aid, for one reason or another, almost never reaches those peoples and collectives that truly need it.

As a result, the Functional Commissions of the United Nations are very important; these are commissions of experts, where scientists, diplomats, politicians and technicians form a multidisciplinary vision and offer their analysis, predictions and recommendations to the Economic and Social Board (ECOSOC) and to the General Assembly of the United Nations. In our case, we refer to the activities of the Commission of Science and Technology for Development (UNCSTD). This is a relatively new organ of the United Nations (founded less than 10 years ago), which is gaining importance thanks to the belief that many global decisions cannot be taken without previous knowledge of the scientific and technological principals which sustain them.

The UNCSTD is a Functional Commission of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, which was created in 1992 during the period of restructuring and strengthening of all their Functional Commissions. It arose as a consequence of the fusion of the Intergovernmental Committee of Science and Technology for Development (IGCSTD) and its Advisory Committee, which were installed following the United Nations Conference in Vienna 1979. The role of the UNCSTD is to act as a Commission of Experts for the General Assembly of the United Nations on relevant themes and as a guide to prevent future disagreements in science and technology by drawing up global recommendations. The UNCSTD is currently made up of 33 Member States; Eight from Africa, seven from Asia, six

from Latin America, four from Eastern Europe and eight from Western Europe and other States. The secretariat of the Commission has been the responsibility of the UNCSTD since 1993 and Spain has had the vice-presidency of the representation of Western Europe and Other States Group since 2001. The UNCSTD also has a Gender Advisory Board, whose activities have recently been supported by the Commission, and which are interconnected with multiple statutes from the United Nations and other organisations in which Spain, Brasil and Tunisia participate as Delegate Representatives of the UNCSTD.

According to the functional character of the UNCSTD, the delegates cover an ample range of activities and areas of expertise. In many cases the additional opinion of other specialists, who contribute as assessors in the analysis of the questions, is also sought. To give some examples from the past two years, we can highlight the contributions of professors and personalities such as Jeffrey Sachs and Calestous Juma from the Centre of International Development of the University of Harvard on one of the panels in the year 2000. More recently Karl P. Sauvant (UNCTAD), Shirley Malcolm (AAAS), José María Figueres (Centre for the Global Agenda, World Economic Forum), Lynn Mytelka (UNU/INTECH), George Nicholas von Tunzelmann (Science & Technology Policy Research, University of Sussex), have also participated. One of the most prestigious advisory reports drawn up by UNCSTD—recognised by ECOSOC—

was that titled *Knowledge Societies*, directed by Robin Mansell and Uta When from the University of Sussex and by Fernando Chaparro (Colombia) y Geoffrey Oldham (UK)<sup>(1)</sup>. Here more than 60 experts made a detailed analysis of information and communication technology and its implications for the development of societies. It is no surprise that the next Commission panel is related to this question.

The last ordinary session of the UNCSTD, which was celebrated in Geneva, showed how important this Commission can be. Rubens Ricupero, Secretary of the UNCTAD commented on the decisive role which the UNCSTD could carry out in its collaboration with the "ICT task force" and with the Third World Science Academy. The resolution of the "Group of 77" — the major coalition of Third World, made up of 133 countries—was also important. They supported and recommended strengthening the Commission's activities in a specific document. However, probably the most categorical support came from the ECOSOC. Thanks to its clarity and strength, this was a surprise to some and a backing for those who had emphasised the need to strengthen the questions of science and technology for development in such a relevant international area. During the videoconference held between Geneva and New York, the members of the bureau of the ECOSOC defined the UNCSTD as the "Best Functional Commission" and invited it to hold more meetings if necessary, suggested its future role as Expert Commission for the implementation of the 'Millennium Declaration' and for it to follow the next meeting for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg 2002 and the Information Societies 2003. Other important initiatives are:

- a) the establishment of links with other United Nations Functional Commissions
- b) the promotion from UNCSTD of "science and technology diplomacy" and,
- c) the excellent role carried out by the "*Science and Technology for Development Network STDev*: <http://www.unctad.org/STdev/>." This electronic network houses the UNCSTD's initiatives, decisions and documents. It provides information on scientific and technological activities and programmes within the United Nations system and among intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, and builds awareness of scientific and technological developments that are particularly important for developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

The UNCSTD, at its fifth session held in Geneva from 28 May–1 June 2001, selected "*Technology Development and Capacity-Building for Competitiveness in a digital society*" as the substantive theme for its inter-sessional period 2001–2003. The work programme for this inter-sessional period will be carried out by panels addressing different aspects of the main substantive theme, namely, technology transfer, diffu-

sion and capacity-building with particular attention to absorption and applications of information and communication technologies (ICT). The UNCSTD's multi-disciplinary links with other Functional Committees and more thematic Committees (e.g. Commission on Sustainable Development, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Commission for Social Development) allow many future projects to be organised. For example, within the scope of the Earth Sciences, the discipline known as socio-geoscience<sup>(2)</sup>, which pays special attention to resources, population and environment, is crucial to deal with the difficulties faced by human beings and provide a solid scientific basis in order to realise the sustainable development. We agree with McLellan and Cordani<sup>(3,4)</sup> when they indicate the need for integration between geology and public policy and the increasingly important role that geosciences will surely play on the road towards a sustainable society and a greater understanding of the Earth.

However, despite the importance of Earth Sciences to society, geoscientists still participate very little in the international forums with responsibility for science, technology and policy. Some names such as Harrison Schmitt (United States Senator representing New Mexico), Claude Allegre (French Minister of National Education, Research and Technology), Enric Banda (Secretary General, European Science Foundation), Geoffrey Oldham (Chairperson of the United Nations Advisory Committee on Science and Technology for Development and Co-Chairperson of the Gender Advisory Board of the UNCSTD, Lynn Moxham (UNESCAP, World Bank and Canadian International Development Agencies), Farkhonda Hassan (Secretary-General of the Egyptian Council for Women (NCW) and Co-Chairperson of the Gender Advisory Board of the UNCST, stand out among others.

In a seminar held during the 31th International Geological Congress various aspects were identified related to the geosciences which typified the so-called "New Earth Science Revolution"<sup>(5)</sup>. They attempt to collect the current position of geosciences in "thematic subjects" and to predict what their future development will be. We believe that contacts should be strengthened and forces joined between the different Commissions and Committees of the United Nations in an attempt to give this social component and the most applied of the geosciences, a relevant role in the international programs. An important first step has recently been taken in relation to the excellent IGCP program: a joint endeavour of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) and IUGS (International Union of Geological Sciences). This was launched in 1972 to facilitate co-operation among geoscientists across frontiers and boundaries and currently operates in about 150 countries and involving several thou-

sands of scientists. The International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) has established a Working Group on Public Affairs to share information on geoscience-related public policy activities around the globe<sup>(6)</sup>.

A survey was sent to its national members asking how geological organisations around the world are engaged in activities related to public policy. Eleven surveys were returned from Europe, four from Africa, three from the USSR and two from Asia<sup>(6)</sup>. This section of Episodes could be an ideal forum to solicit the proposals, not only from governments, but also from scientific and technological associations, or any institution which has something to offer the UNCSTD from their own specialised areas, to in our case: a) distribute the range of possibilities of geoscience in many social sectors; b) give incentives to geo-scientists to participate and be involved as much as other professions; and c) contribute so that the transfer of knowledge and technology to developing countries is something more than just words and good intentions.

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