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**The CONTINENTAL CRUST:  
LIVING on it and DEVELOPIN our INTERACTION with it**

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Population growth, urbanisation, poverty alleviation, technology development, food supply, energy demand, water resources, security, infectious diseases and, compounding them all, climate change, are all part of a common thread of "change" running through the global challenges facing mankind. These changes operate at global, regional and local scales and take place over periods from minutes to millennia. They present considerable challenges for society and are the overriding priority for the environmental research, regulatory and industrial communities. The geosciences play a pivotal role in providing solutions for many of the problems these changes present. However, we need to understand, at a greater level of detail and complexity than currently exists, how the Earth's system works and how human development is changing that system. We need to use this knowledge to predict and manage the impacts on the planet, its ecosystems and people. This paper will summarise how we need to learn to live with the Earth and communicate the challenges, advantages and risks of this relationship to the non-specialist.