

Scientific and Technological Community
First Intersessional Meeting – Rio+20 – New York,
Statement on “new and emerging challenges” (10/01/2011)

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Mr. Chairman,

The Scientific and Technological Community would like to contribute to this discussion on the Synthesis Report and we welcome the presentations by the panelists. In the debate we have heard only a few references to the item “new and emerging challenges”. Research communities across the globe would like to draw attention to new scientific evidence indicating that human induced global environmental change, including climate change and ecosystems change, is occurring at an ever increasing rate and intensity. Given this unprecedented situation, Rio+20 is a unique opportunity to agree on mitigation and adaptation actions at a truly large scale to avoid dangerous consequences for people worldwide and a possible cascading deterioration of the life support systems on our planet.

The woefully insufficient implementation of the outcomes of previous summits must be addressed by Rio+20 and the pace and scale of implementation must be radically enhanced. Measures aimed at strengthening the environmental pillar of sustainable development must be accompanied by much enhanced measures aimed at bridging the development gap between North and South and at reducing poverty.

Science and technology will together have crucial roles in finding solutions to these interrelated economic, social and environmental problems. Three examples of what needs to be done: First, as has been called for in the debate, the science-policy links must be strengthened greatly. Second, unprecedented challenges require novel, innovative responses. Engineers, as well as social and natural scientists, need to develop and evaluate innovative technologies and innovative social and economic responses, and their application in the “green economy” must be accelerated.

Third, the scientific community needs stronger support for its efforts of improving our capability to forecast tomorrow's environmental conditions, also at a regional scale, and their consequences for people and economies. To this end, scientists, as well as decision-makers and managers need more and better data. Governments should significantly increase support for national and global observing systems and robust information and forecast services.

Thank you.