



The Nordic Countries invite you to The 33rd IGC

INTERNATIONAL GEOLOGICAL CONGRESS OSLO 2008

August 6 – 14th

Speech at the Opening Ceremony 7 August

Speaker: President of the 33rd IGC Arne Bjørlykke

Opening of 33 IGC

You're Majesty, Minister, Your Excellencies, delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of the 33 International Geological Congress I welcome you to the Nordic Countries or Norden and to Oslo. IGC is the Olympic Games for geoscientist, and it takes place every 4 four years and encompasses a wide spectrum of disciplines within the Earth Sciences. The first IGC was held in Paris in 1878 and previous IGCs in Norden took place in Stockholm in 1910 and in Copenhagen in 1960.

The 33 IGC will demonstrate that knowledge in earth science has become vital to society, both globally and locally. Climate change, Geohazards, water supply and health, production and supply of minerals and energy resources, underground constructions and fundamentation, management of marine resources and tourism are all areas that demand knowledge in earth science of high quality.

The most important challenge now is the climate change, and the large uncertainties in most models show how complex the Earth system is. We must increase our efforts in climate research. The debate on climate change has a profound societal impact and is a good illustration of how difficult it can be to combine constructive scientific criticism of models and theories and providing clear knowledge and advice to society and its political leadership.

The huge natural disasters we have seen in the last few years, the tsunami in the Indian Ocean, cyclone in Burma and New Orleans, Earthquakes in Pakistan and China, all remind us about the great importance of earth sciences in order to cope with the challenges of an increasingly populated world.

It is 150 years since Charles Darwin wrote his famous book on the origin of the species. The founding of IGC took place during the debate that followed Darwin's book. After more than a hundred years of specialization, we are now developing a more holistic view of nature again. This is demonstrated in climate change research, where the complexity of nature require large research teams comprising specialists in many different fields. The Global challenges we are facing must be met by increased international cooperation. The Chinese Prime minister and geologist Wen Jiabao have said that "Geological sciences and geological structures do not end at national boundaries. Working on the same planet, geologists need to communicate and share knowledge with each other, and to draw on each other's experiences.

At the 33 IGC we want to follow up on the holistic approach and we have called the 33 IGC for the World geosciences Congress to demonstrate the interdisciplinary character of IGC. We are happy to see that many specialists from fields outside the IUGS are attending the Congress and contributing in symposia and discussions.



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This holistic approach is not reflected in the global organization of the earth sciences, which are divided into seven disciplinary unions. The impact of earth science in the global community has therefore been low. We need change. We must join forces and establish one earth science union. We should also follow Wen Jiabaos advice and improve the international communication by arranging a world Congress in Earth science every year.

We see, however, that change is indeed taking place. New non disciplinary organizations like, The International Year of Planet Earth and OneGeology are important initiative to provide geoscientific information to the global community. IGC has the ambition to be one of the preferred platforms for these organizations in their communication with the scientific community.

We strongly believe in improving communication with society. The Themes of the Day is our new platform for such communication. The themes comprise global geology, early life, climate change, geohazards, water and health, mineral supply, energy supply and earth and beyond. The Theme of the Day will tell us how important geoscientific knowledge is for society. Several presentations will be webcasted and we will provide as much background material as possible for the media. This is a new invention for this IGCs, and we hope it will be continued by future IGCs.

We are thankful for all the support we received from petroleum industry, mining industry, governmental and other organizations in the Nordic countries. We want particularly to thank our main sponsor Statoil-Hydro and the Norwegian Government. It would not have been possible to hold this congress here without your generous contributions. And last but not least I want to thank Secretary General Anders Solheim, the Organization committee, Science committee, and advisory board for your hard and enthusiastic work. I would also thank the Organising committee of 32IGC for all the help and support. Your Congress in Florence in 2004 was a great success and an inspiration to us.

We have received 6500 scientific contributions to the 33rd IGC. We are particularly satisfied with the increase in contributions from the petroleum and mining geosciences, which are broadening the IGC platform. I thank you all for your contributions.

I hope you will have some interesting days at IGC. I also hope that you will enjoy the excursions and social events.

Welcome to Oslo and the 33 IGC.