

**RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN GEOSCIENCES:
INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAMS**
(from Sospeter Muhongo)

1. INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF PLANET EARTH (2006)

International Union of Geosciences (IUGS, based in Oslo), in collaboration with the International Geoscience Programme (IGCP, based in Paris, UNESCO Office) and UNESCO (Division of Earth Sciences), has decided to launch IYPE in 2006. However, activities within the framework of the Year will run for a period of at least three years (2005-2007), and an estimated budget of US\$ 20 million (besides other sources) is earmarked for the selected 8 broad research themes (groundwater, hazards, health, climate, resources, megacities, deep earth and ocean). IUGS, representing about 250.000 geoscientists across 117 countries, has taken this initiative on the Earth System and its resources and sustainable management within the realm of the UN-proclaimed international years. Consequently, we are all involved and African geoscientists have to be proactive and participate in this ambitious and prestigious year. Our countries (governments) have to support China's submission to the UN general assembly. For more details visit, www.esfs.org.

2. NEW GEOLOGICAL MAPS

The Commission of the Geological Map of the World (CGMW), in collaboration with UNESCO, will soon (by August 2004) produce new maps on the geology, hydrogeology, etc of the world, including separate sheets for Africa, Europe etc. The biggest display of these maps will be in Florence, Italy, in August 2004, during the 32nd International Geological Congress. More details may be obtained from the website of CGMW.

A 10 million-scale map on the geology and major ore deposits of Africa is now printed. The work for this was undertaken by geologists from the Geological Survey of France (BRGM, 33 geologists under the leadership of Jean-Pierre Milesi) and African geologists (Kampunzu-Botswana/DR Congo, Toteu-Cameroon, Tadesse-Ethiopia and Muhongo-Tanzania). The first edition of this map will be displayed and sold (low price) in Orleans, France, in June 2004 during the 20th Colloquium of Africa Geology (CAG20). Do not forget attending this meeting: <http://cag20.brgm.fr>

The second draft of the geological map of Tanzania (1:2.000.000) is in the final stages of preparation by geologists from BRGM (France) and Tanzania (University of Dar Es Salaam & Geological Survey). A working meeting on this map will be held on coming Friday (20 February) at 14 hrs. We intend to produce two sheets- (i) map showing tectonic domains, major structures and all reliable isotopic ages, and (ii) map showing all major mineral deposits. The first editions of these maps will be displayed in June 2004 in Orleans (France) during the CAG20.

3. NEW ACCEPTED IGCP PROJECTS

The 32nd Scientific Board of IGCP-IUGS-UNESCO was recently held in Paris to evaluate new project proposals and ongoing ones (42). Africa did not succeed to get a new IGCP project. This means that we remain with only 5-African-led projects (3 for Sub-Saharan Africa). We need better project proposals from Africa. Please note that there are two types of IGCP projects – (i) the normal ones and (ii) the newly introduced young geoscientists projects. We might get more projects through the second type, especially from those who have just completed their PhDs. More details on this issue may be obtained directly from me. As you might know my 4-year term in the board came to end in this February but IUGS-UNESCO requested me to continue serving the board and I was elected as a Vice Chairman of this board during the recent IGCP scientific board meeting. Thus, we have to push hard for projects from Africa. Young scientists should be highly encouraged and assisted to come up project proposals.

4. GEOLOGICAL HERITAGE PROGRAM

These are the geoparks and geosites. They are unique geological features of spectacular importance to earth science (global scientific importance) and the surrounding community. A good example here is the Tanzania's Oldonyo Lengai (The God for the Maasai people and unique active felsic magmatism). UNESCO has decided to support all world-wide initiatives aiming at preservations of such unique natural features for the future generations. China is leading with 44 spectacular geoparks and we recently (UNESCO's International Advisory Group of Experts on Geoparks/Geosites) evaluated and endorsed 8 of them for UNESCO's assistance. Europe got endorsement of their 17 geoparks. Africa is lagging behind and drastic measures have to be taken. We are planning to hold an international meeting (plus field excursion) on Africa's potential geoparks/geosites in Arusha in September 2004. I will keep you informed this issue.

Please forward this message to your colleagues – information dissemination is a chronic problem in Africa – we have to stamp off this hindrance of our scientific achievement.