

Human wellbeing and the Earth system on which it depends are in transition involving complex dynamic interactions and feedbacks. Global changes include profound alterations of ecosystems and the services they provide to humanity. Drivers of environmental change are likely to intensify as human population grows and consumption expands. Some of the changes to the Earth system have improved access for millions of people to food, water, and other services satisfying basic human needs. On the other hand, unintended consequences from these changes threaten food security, energy security, human health, livelihoods and other aspects of our wellbeing. Deeper understanding and awareness of these changes and the underlying social-ecological systems' interactions enhances our capacity for remedial and corrective action and offers hope of effective response. The challenge of sustainable development is to grasp this opportunity and transform social-ecological systems to provide food, water, energy, health and human security in a manner that is economically, ecologically and socially viable for people in all parts of the world in the current timeframe, and for many generations in the future.

Recognition of the urgent need for actions to sustain achieved gains in human wellbeing without compromising capacity of ecosystems to provide for future generations is very high in the current agenda of global policy fora and agencies (e.g. CBD, World Food Summit, Diversitas Congress, IUCN, UNESCO and others) and other regional and national actors and stakeholders in sustainable development. We seem to be at a crucial juncture where science, technology, policy and other communities can begin to work together to achieve more favorable planetary conditions. A great diversity of institutional arrangements, policies and practices have been proposed to achieve these goals. Yet many challenges remain on how to choose among the many options. Success and failure appear to be context-specific and no particular policy or practice is likely to solve all problems, in all places and times. At present, there are critical gaps in our knowledge of the social, biological, biogeochemical and physical foundations needed to make decisions for a sustainable future.

Inspired by ICSU's new Programme on Ecosystem Change and Society, the goal of the ESF Research Conference is to exchange experiences that will help us begin to understand transformations toward or away from sustainable development, including measures for eradication of poverty and halting environmental degradation.

The conference focus will be on comparing findings of research that studies social-ecological systems' interactions associated with specific landscapes, seascapes or coastal regions. There is remarkable geographic variability in policies, practices and outcomes for management of natural capital, flows of ecosystem services, and human outcomes. Invited speakers and presenters will be drawn from a range of disciplines, research approaches and findings based on diverse sources of information including narrative, qualitative and quantitative data and historical records in addition to more traditional technical monitoring tools and remote sensing.

## RESEARCH CONFERENCES

ESF-Africa Frontier Research Conference

# Dynamic Interlinkages between Social and Ecosystem Changes: Towards a Europe Africa Partnership

Hotel Golden Tulip de Beyaerd, Hulshort • The Netherlands  
8-12 November 2010



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**Chairs: Marja J. Spienburg** - VU University Amsterdam, NL  
& **Rashid M. Hassan** - CEEPA, ZA

**Invited Speakers will include: (list to be completed)**

- **Social institutions and ecosystem changes**  
**Arun Agrawal** - University of Michigan, US  
**James Murombedzi** - IUCN, ZW
- **Managing tradeoffs between multiple ecosystem services**  
**Line Gordon** - Stockholm Resilience Centre, SE  
**Belinda Reyers** - CSIR, ZA
- **Resilience and vulnerability of social and ecosystems to climate change**  
**Anantha Duraipappah** - United Nation Environment Programme  
**Brian Walker** - *tbc*
- **Biodiversity, ecosystem change and human wellbeing**  
**Themba Kepe** - University of Toronto, CA  
**Charles Perrings** - Arizona State University, US
- **Drivers of ecosystem and social change**  
**Eduardo Brondizio** - Indiana University, US  
**Bruce Campbell** - *tbc*  
**Peter Minang** - CGIAR, US

**Application form & programme** available from  
[www.esf.org/conferences/10339](http://www.esf.org/conferences/10339)

**Closing date for application extended to 2 August 2010**

European Science Foundation | Research Conferences Unit  
149 avenue Louise | Box 14 | Tour Generali, 15th Floor | Brussels | Belgium  
Tel: + 32 (0)2 533 2020 | Fax: +32 (0)2 538 8486  
Email: [conferences@esf.org](mailto:conferences@esf.org) | [www.esf.org/conferences](http://www.esf.org/conferences)