



# 6th SCIENCE CENTRE WORLD CONGRESS

4 - 8 SEPTEMBER 2011  
CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

*Science Across Cultures*



## CALL FOR SESSION PROPOSALS

6TH SCIENCE CENTRE WORLD CONGRESS • 4-8 SEPTEMBER 2011

CAPE TOWN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE, CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

### CONGRESS THEME

The theme **Science Across Cultures** addresses the role that science centres should play in recognising that science is an integral component of our universal human culture and that science is derived and applied differently in different cultural contexts. It is not an endeavour that arose out of one culture, nor do its impacts affect only one culture. The benefits and costs of science, and of the application and misapplication of scientific knowledge, affect us all. Furthermore, science centres need to emphasise the message that a winning nation is a nation that develops an information-based economy driven by innovation, and which invests strongly in its people.

**Science Across Cultures** also highlights the multi-cultural roots of science and technology and recognises the value, to all humankind, of both indigenous knowledge systems and modern science. Many of the sustainable technologies being belatedly developed today derive from indigenous knowledge systems. This knowledge is not only of historical interest, it is also interfacing with modern science in the fields of biotechnology and nanotechnology and paving the way for new science.

Science centres can no longer afford to be impartial commentators on the passing scientific scene. They need to take a stance and claim the territory of communicating important issues related to the interface between science and society to their visiting public. They need to be activist in their approach to raising human awareness of the ways in which scientific knowledge can be used to improve the quality of life of all humans, irrespective of their culture, religion or creed. Furthermore, science centres need to make the point that the developed world should not progress at the expense of the developing world. The global environmental crisis has been precipitated not only by humankind's unsustainable exploitation of limited renewable natural resources, but also by the unequal development of human societies across the globe.

Science centres are well-placed today to play a leading role in ensuring that the benefits of science reach and empower all societies and cultures, and can be used to promote equitable human development and a decreased human carbon footprint.

Modern science offers not only high-tech solutions but also intermediate and low-tech solutions to the problems facing society. Many of the intermediate or low-tech solutions derive from sustainable indigenous technologies. Traditional and modern science also cross-cut with other areas of human endeavour in the social, economic and ethical fields. Science centres need to expand their comfort zones to include these broader facets of science and society in their teaching and awareness programmes. The boundaries of science are expanding and we need to expand our programmes accordingly.

The theme and sub-themes of the 6SCWC are also informed by the Toronto Declaration. This Declaration states, *inter alia*:

- We, the participants in the 5th Science Centre World Congress, believe that science is an important tool for a better life on our planet.
- A new era of global co-operation respecting local cultures is needed if we are to successfully live on a planet with diminishing resources and significant environmental challenges.
- We will use our collective expertise and experience in helping to expand the activities of our sector to places and communities where science centres are needed and wanted but not yet established.
- We commit to work together to overcome cultural, physical, social, economic and geographic barriers to engage and connect people through science.
- We will actively seek out issues related to science and society where the voices of citizens should be heard and ensure that dialogue occurs.
- We will work together to identify how science centres can contribute to the achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals.

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The relevant UN Millennium Development Goals to which science centres can potentially contribute include, *inter alia*:

- **Achieve universal primary education:** In all regions, inequalities in access to education continue to pose major barriers to fully attaining the target of ensuring that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, can complete a full course of primary schooling.
- **Ensure environmental sustainability:** In particular, integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources and biodiversity.
- **Develop a global partnership for development** by addressing the special needs of least-developed countries, landlocked countries and small island developing countries. In particular, to work in co-operation with the private sector, making available the benefits of new technologies, especially in information and communications technologies.



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## CONGRESS SUB-THEMES

In April 2010 the International Programme Committee of the 6th Science Centre World Congress endorsed four main strands for discussion, taking into account the points raised above. These sub-themes also emerged from recommendations by the Local Organising Committee and after consultation within the participating regions. In the year prior to the 6SCWC, each regional conference is asked to engage their members in discussions on these sub-themes. Ultimately a declaration of emerging trends in the field, called the "Cape Town Declaration", will be released during the 6SCWC, including resolutions for future action.

### 1. Science as part of culture

The development of scientific literacy, i.e. the ability of the general population to understand the basic concepts of science, is a key success factor in the modern world and one to which science centres make an important contribution. Understanding "how things work", and sharing that knowledge with others, is a way of honouring one of the nobler impulses of humankind. The awe and wonder that our early ancestors felt, and which we still feel today, when confronted with Nature's grand design, is one of our most fundamental human emotions. Our role as science centres is to constantly rekindle this basic emotion, and, at the same time, promote science as a fair and equitable human endeavour that benefits all cultures equally. We also need to discuss with our visitors the direction that science is taking us, and the ethical and psychological consequences of an increasingly technological world.

### 2. Building communities through science: the role of science centres

The social contract between science, and by extension science centres, and society implies that we should use science for the benefit of all humankind, as well as for the benefit of the non-human inhabitants of our planet. The international science centre community has the capacity to mount a global campaign that inspires people of all cultures to recognise that the effective use of the products and services of science and technology can be used to empower people and help them to build stable, sustainable and productive communities.

### 3. Recognising the multi-cultural roots of science and technology

Science and technology are not just a Western endeavour – their roots can be traced to China, India, Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Islamic world and Latin America; and to the indigenous peoples of North America, the Arctic, Latin America, Africa, Asia, Australasia and the Pacific islands. Science is the product of the collective human yearning for understanding; technology turns that science into useful products and services; science centres unravel this complex web and help prepare people for a rapidly changing technological world. Recognising the multi-cultural roots of science adds colour, context and a new vibe of excitement to the teaching of science in our institutions. All science centres should be able to find inspiring examples of the multi-cultural roots of science at the local, regional or global level.

### 4. The value of Indigenous Knowledge Systems

The true value of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) has begun to be appreciated in Western cultures but a great deal of misunderstanding still exists. IKS is science developed over millennia through observation and practical experiment, but it is not "pseudo-science". Today, there is a strong dialogue between modern science and IKS. Traditional science is under scrutiny but modern science is also enhancing its credibility by revealing the remarkable theoretical underpinnings of its traditional practices. Science centres have a vital role to play in highlighting the substantial role that IKS have played in laying the foundation for modern science, as well as for a future, more sustainable wave of technologies. Science centres should also promote the products of IKS in order to bring benefits to the indigenous people on whose intellectual property they were originally based. In South Africa, traditional Khoisan hunters who first discovered the appetite-suppressant properties of the succulent *Hoodia gordonii* now receive royalties from the sale of *Hoodia* products worldwide.

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES FROM THE SUB-THEMES





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# CALL FOR SESSION PROPOSALS

The 6th Science Centre World Congress is aimed at CEOs and decision-makers in the science centre and science museum industry, as well as at developers of new science centres and science museums in Africa and other developing regions. The target audience also includes informal science educators at universities and colleges, in educational NGOs and in traditional artefact-based museums. It will feature five keynote sessions related to the congress theme and sub-themes, and an exciting programme of plenary and parallel sessions. There will also be an array of diverse opportunities to participate in discussions and debates.

In addition, congress delegates and accompanying persons will have the opportunity to participate in a social programme comprising tours of science centres, museums and other heritage attractions of interest in and around Cape Town. A wide variety of pre- and post-congress tours to world-famous destinations throughout Southern Africa will also be offered to delegates.

## PARALLEL SESSION PROGRAMME

The parallel session programme is designed not only to provide presenters with an opportunity to contribute to the congress, but also to maximise opportunities for participants in sessions to share ideas.

You are invited to propose a topic under one of the four sub-themes using the electronic session proposal form on the 6th Science Centre World Congress website ([www.6scwc.org](http://www.6scwc.org)).

Preference will be given to proposals that link to one or more of the congress sub-themes. Parallel sessions should be developed that will appeal to the interests of CEOs, decision-makers and science centre developers.

**Proposals must involve input by presenters from three or more international regions.**

## SESSION FORMATS

### Panel Discussion:

Two to five presenters provide short presentations on a particular topic/issue related to the theme or sub-themes, followed by substantial discussion involving participants. No more than two presenters should be from the same continent.

**Session length: 1.5 or 3.0 hours**

### Forum Discussion:

A convener chairs inputs and facilitates discussion among participants on a particular topic/issue related to the theme or sub-themes. The topic may be based on reports or surveys of current and future issues impacting on science centres. No more than two presenters should be from the same continent.

**Session length: 1.5 or 3.0 hours**

### Workshop:

Presenters actively involve participants in learning new skills and techniques as a session during the congress. In addition, a Pre-Congress Workshop will be held to pass on skills related to science centre development to delegates from Africa and other developing continents.

**Session length: 1.5 or 3.0 hours**

### Poster Sessions:

A number of poster sessions will be available. Proposals must be relevant to the congress theme and sub-themes and to the interests of CEOs, decision-makers and science centre developers.

## SUBMISSION

All session proposals must be submitted no later than 15 October 2010, using the electronic session proposal form (at [www.6scwc.org](http://www.6scwc.org) under Call For Sessions), in English. Proposals sent by fax will not be accepted. All proposals must be submitted electronically.

A maximum of 500 words is allowed for all session proposals.

Delegates should contact their regional representatives on the International Programme Committee (IPC) of the 6th Science Centre World Congress for further details on how to put together a successful session proposal. The regional representatives on the IPC are:

**ASTC:** Bud Rock, Nancy Stueber, Per-Edvin Persson

**ECSITE:** Catherine Franche, Erik Jacquemyn, Vincenzo Lipardi

**ASPAC:** Brenton Honeyman, Yanhao Xu, Tengku Nasariah Ibrahim

**RedPOP:** Alejandra León-Castellá, Joaquin Fargas, Julia Taguena

**NAMES:** Mijbil Almutawa

**SAASTEC:** Julie Cleverdon, Mike Bruton

**NCSM:** Ganga Rautela

## CONFIRMATION AND REVIEW

All proposals will be confirmed by email upon receipt by the 6SCWC Congress Secretariat. The International Programme Committee (IPC) will review the proposals and select the sessions. Acceptance will be confirmed by email in December 2010.

## IMPORTANT DATES

**Submission deadline:** 15 October 2010

**Acceptance notice:** December 2010

**Congress dates:** 4-8 September 2011