



# GLOBAL *understanding*

*2014 will be the 300th anniversary of the death of H Carl von Carlowitz, founder of the concept of sustainability. The IGU seeks UNESCO's support for the proclamation by the UN General Assembly of the International Year of Global Understanding (IYGU) 2014.*



## CONTACT

Professor Benno Werlen, Executive Director

*IGU Initiative for an  
UN International  
Year of Global Understanding*  
Department of Geography  
University of Jena

IYUN\_IGU@uni-jena.de  
[www.global-understanding.info](http://www.global-understanding.info)

International Year of

# GLOBAL *understanding*

**IYGU**

An initiative of  
The International Geographical Union (IGU)

# GLOBAL *understanding*

*Global thinking and global action demand global understanding. This initiative by the International Geographical Union aims to bridge the awareness gap between local acts and global effects. It will do this through research, education and information.*

## WHAT IS IYGU?

The International Year of Global Understanding (IYGU) addresses the ways in which we inhabit an increasingly globalized world and transform nature. Societies and cultures determine the ways we live with and shape nature. They also influence how we perceive the global consequences of our everyday behaviour. You can't change the world if you don't understand what your daily actions mean for the world as a whole.

## LINKING THE GLOBAL AND THE LOCAL

Human actions play a part in creating such worldwide challenges as climate change. However, human actions will also bring solutions. If individual people are aware of what their day-to-day routines mean for the planet, they can take appropriate action. Our world faces social, cultural, and economic change, as well as a changing climate. Global understanding will support policy decisions that promote sustainability.

## PEOPLE'S POLITICS

Global challenges require swift, yet considered, political action and goal setting. We cannot afford to wait for the ideal decision-making body with global jurisdiction – it may never happen! Instead, change must come from the bottom up. Individual people make choices, vote, and drive policy at local, regional, and national levels. Widespread global understanding embeds awareness of the global consequences of individual choices in successful future societies.

## SCIENCE AND EVERYDAY LIFE

Global understanding calls for the reconciliation of the global and the local. But it also requires the reconciliation of science and everyday lives. The IYGU focuses on essential daily activities such as eating, drinking, housing, working, traveling and communicating. Why do we make the choices that we do? Which societies make more globally effective choices? Answers will come from the joint efforts of natural and social scientists.

## HOW DID IYGU ARISE?

The IYGU flows from agendas for global sustainability research established by the International Councils of Natural Sciences (ICSU) and Social Sciences (ISSC). By promoting a new level of focused research collaboration among the social and natural sciences and the humanities, the IYGU reinforces existing UN priorities. Global understanding supports and extends initiatives such as the UN Millennium Development Goals and the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, for which UNESCO is the focal point. Successful outcomes of previous UN International Years have laid the foundations for the IYGU.

## SUSTAINABILITY AND UNDERSTANDING

Global sustainability cannot come about without local sustainability. Actions and thoughts that may seem disconnected in space and time are often fundamentally linked. True global understanding empowers people to make such connections. Many people know about the need for sustainability, but few make the corresponding decisions. The IYGU's main goal is to promote global understanding so that actions and decisions yield sustainable outcomes, every day, all over the world.

## HOW TO DO IT?

The IYGU aims to yield deep, but actionable, insights into the ways all peoples can live together more sustainably. The focus will be on developing strategies for targeted local projects with global reach. There are three elements: research, education, and information. Research will bring social and natural scientists together to understand the global impacts of everyday local activities. Teaching will use research results in classrooms worldwide, at all levels. The IYGU will provide information to increase public awareness using, for example, publications, computer games, and TV programmes.

*Ultimately, the IYGU will encourage everyone to make daily decisions in the light of global challenges.*