



6th SCIENCE CENTRE WORLD CONGRESS

4 - 8 SEPTEMBER 2011
CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

Science Across Cultures

CAPE TOWN DECLARATION

At the 6th Science Centre World Congress convened in Cape Town, South Africa, from 4-8 September 2011, 416 delegates from 56 countries assessed the impact of science centres worldwide and formulated plans that will ensure that they continue to play a constructive role in addressing global issues at the interface between science and society. The Congress continued the dialogue from previous world gatherings in Finland (1996), India (1999), Australia (2002), Brazil (2005) and Canada (2008).

Globally, science centres and interactive museums have taken the lead in hands-on, inquiry-based learning, and have achieved a high trust rate for the accuracy of the information that they communicate. They focus on promoting dialogue and debate while learning, and on deriving explanations, rather than just providing answers, for important scientific discoveries and phenomena. They endeavour to promote social engagement across generations and cultures as well as an ethos of lifelong learning.

Each year, over 310 million people actively participate in the in-house and outreach science engagement programmes organized by over 2 500 science centres in more than 90 countries and administrative regions. These science centres recognize that the three pillars of interactive science engagement are science knowledge, hands-on interaction, and dialogue and the co-creation of experiences with scientists and the public.

Science centres also recognize that 'smart play' is one of the most effective ways of learning for people of all ages. Their role is to reach beyond the provision of information into the development of understanding and wisdom. This wisdom brings about changed mindsets and behaviours that lead to the development of more sustainable life styles. Science centres help people, and therefore societies, to maximize their potential.

Science centres are places where construction of meaning takes place, and scientific and technological advances are understood in their appropriate contexts. Although trust in scientists remains high, science centre audiences do not automatically accept that all scientific advances mean progress for everyone. They want to engage with scientists and to understand the long term implications of their research. There is thus a need for improved dialogue between scientists and the public during the course of the scientific process that leads to societal change.

This Declaration is consistent with the core contributions made by science centres worldwide and outlined in the Toronto Declaration of 2008. This Cape Town Declaration of 2011 notes that, over the past three years, science centres have especially:

- Linked their programmes to the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations, especially by promoting universal education, creating awareness of HIV/Aids, and promoting environmental sustainability.

Plans to achieve these resolutions will be developed, as appropriate, at institutional, national and international levels. At the 2014 Science Centre World Summit, to be held at Technopolis® in Mechelen, Belgium, in 2014, science centres and museums shall assess the extent to which they have, as individual institutions and collectively, achieved the goals set out here.

- Strived to form collaborative partnerships across cultural, political, economic and geographical boundaries so as to ensure that the most effective methods of science and technology engagement reach more societies and communities.
- Considered the value of 'real' experiences and the inherent benefits of engaging directly with visitors, while making increasingly effective use of web-based digital media, as well as mixed-reality and virtual reality media, to engage with their publics.
- Celebrated the universality of science whilst recognizing its multi-cultural origins and the value of indigenous knowledge systems.
- Strongly promoted creativity, invention and innovation.
- Facilitated greater engagement between scientists and the general public so that public opinions on science and technology issues can be heard and debated.

At the 6th Science Centre World Congress, leaders of science centres and museums worldwide resolve to:

- Encourage the establishment of science centres and museums in parts of the world where they are lacking.
- Support a policy of investment in science, technology and innovation in response to global economic and financial challenges.
- Partner with formal education, arts, business, policy makers and media where relevant.
- Strive to address cross-generational science- and technology-related problems that are relevant to local, regional and global communities, and to develop programmes that allow the general public to contribute actively to the resolution of these problems.
- Continue to develop programmes that promote awareness of the multi-cultural roots of science and the value of indigenous knowledge systems.
- Continue to develop partnerships to promote science awareness and engagement across cultural, political, economic and geographical boundaries.
- Conduct further research that measures the efficiency and effectiveness of their programmes, and to act on this information in order to improve their efficiency and impact.
- Further promote dialogue between scientists and the general public so that public opinions on science and technology can be heard and incorporated into decision-making processes.
- Further promote creativity, invention and innovation that leads to more sustainable life styles.
- Work together to ensure that they share their joint experience and knowledge of the most effective methods of engaging with science and technology with other local, regional, national and international bodies that promote science and technology awareness.

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CAPE TOWN DECLARATION ENDORSED BY:

ASPAC - Asia Pacific Network of Science and Technology Centres

ASTC - Association of Science-Technology Centers

Ecsite - European Network of Science Centres and Museums

NAMES - The North Africa and Middle East Science centers network

NCSM - National Council of Science Museums, India

Red-POP - Network for the Popularization of Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean

SAASTEC - Southern African Association of Science and Technology Centres

