

Engaging outside the scientific
community



From 26 - 28 September 2008, 43 young scientists, selected by the **InterAcademy Panel (IAP)** in collaboration with its 100 member academies from around the world and representing 32 countries on five continents, participated in the **Annual Meeting of New Champions of the World Economic Forum** in Tianjin, China.

The young scientists made the following statement:

Passion for Science Passion for a Better World

*The Tianjin Statement of Global Young Scientists
at the Annual Meeting of New Champions of the
World Economic Forum 2008*



As young scientists from all five continents, we are passionate about science, and we are passionate about science contributing to a better world. We wish to enhance the contribution that we can make to science and that science can make to society. Science and technology play an important role in addressing the challenges we face today, from reducing hunger and poverty, finding a cure for diseases such as malaria, to protecting the environment. We believe that these are universal aspirations, shared by young scientists around the world and deserving global solutions. Actions are required at local, national and international levels by young scientists themselves, senior scientists, science policy makers, politicians, the private and civil society sectors and the general public.

Two global meetings on sustainability

- GYA GA May 2012, Johannesburg

Sustainability: Lessons on the road between Rio and Rio+20

- IAP GA, February 2013, Rio de Janeiro

Grand challenges and integrated innovation: Research for sustainable development and poverty irradiation





The Atacama Large Millimeter/Submillimeter Array (ALMA) telescope in Chile is a massive collaborative effort between many countries.

Global challenges
need global solutions



Global Young Academy

The voice of young scientists around the world

The GYA Sandton Declaration on Sustainability

Twenty years ago, the 1992 Rio Conference on Environment and Development inspired a generation of young people to take up the global challenge of forging pathways to sustainability. Many of those who did are now emerging scientific leaders whose research programs are dedicated to understanding and discovering solutions to this challenge. These leaders are represented in the Global Young Academy.



Young scientists reflect on how to effect real change for Rio+40

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The Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development (20–22 June 2012) forces reflection on progress since the original UN Conference on Environment and Development that was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Scientific knowledge relevant to sustainability has grown exponentially since the first conference, but concrete steps to achieve sustainability have been slow or even non-existent.

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“For science and young scientists to play the role required in the modern, technological and challenging world, public support is essential. For this support to be fostered, scientists - and especially young scientists - need to engage with and educate the general public. The public must be made aware of the strategic importance of the investment in science and technology.”



If you want to win the game, you must join in

When governments ignore scientific advice, it is often because researchers do not engage with the political process, says Rees Kassen.

Scientists tend to blame poor policy decisions on a scientifically illiterate or uninterested political class and a media that oversimplifies ideas or sensationalizes controversy. There is no doubt a nugget of truth here. In the current Canadian parliament, just 17 of 308 MPs hold a first degree in the natural sciences, engineering or health sciences. If parliament reflected national university graduation rates in these fields, there would be 98.

Still, researchers must recognize that poor scientific decisions in politics do not necessarily result from a lack of understanding. They are, rather, a failure of scientists to communicate their message effectively in what is ultimately a political, not a scientific, arena.

I can almost hear the pings of e-mails filling my inbox with counterexamples. The most obvious is taking place right now in South Africa, where we see the continuing reluctance of governments worldwide to deal with climate change, despite the overwhelming evidence. Others will cite the discussions over the proposed pipeline linking the oil sands in Alberta to refineries in Texas, or the teaching of intelligent-design creationism alongside evolution in US high-school science classes — all evidence that science is not getting a fair hearing in policy debates.

Most politicians are not economists, yet in the battle for decision-makers' attention, economists have a history of winning. Perhaps this is because scientists are simply not interested in engaging in the to and fro of politics. Or perhaps it is because we prefer our advice to be accurate and comprehensive, rather than straight to the point and persuasive. Or maybe it is because scientists bear a heavier burden in the public eye for getting things wrong, as the mistakes of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change a couple of years ago seem to suggest.

A former top bureaucrat in the Canadian civil service once gave me the political perspective on this divide: scientists, he said, think

the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance, which makes recommendations on budget spending to the cabinet. Other activities include our 'Bacon and Eggheads' programme, a breakfast seminar series where top-flight researchers address parliamentarians, their staff, the media and bureaucrats.

PAGSE has had an impact. Although one can rarely be sure what has influenced the inner workings of government decisions, many of its recommendations have at least been in tune with recent actions. Last year, for example, saw the creation of a prestigious, internationally competitive postdoctoral fellowship programme. This was a suggestion that came, in part, from PAGSE.

The relationship is not always so smooth. Last year, a federal minister became interested in the idea of a national biodiversity survey, something biologists had been working towards for some time. When he asked for input, the biological community responded with multiple briefs, some of which undermined one another. Such disagreement offers a perfect excuse not to act, even if the goodwill is there. That is exactly what happened.

Here are three suggestions to build greater trust between scientists and politicians.

First, improve the lines of communication. Opportunities for graduate students and scientists to carry out internships and secondments in a political environment, such as the Congressional Fellows programme run by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, are a start in this direction.

Second, we need scientists to stand for election to public office. Having more people on the

inside of the political process who are, or have been, professional scientists should go a long way to increasing understanding among their political colleagues. It also builds trust in the scientific community for the political process.

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Young scientists are missing out on vital skills

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Bernard Slippers



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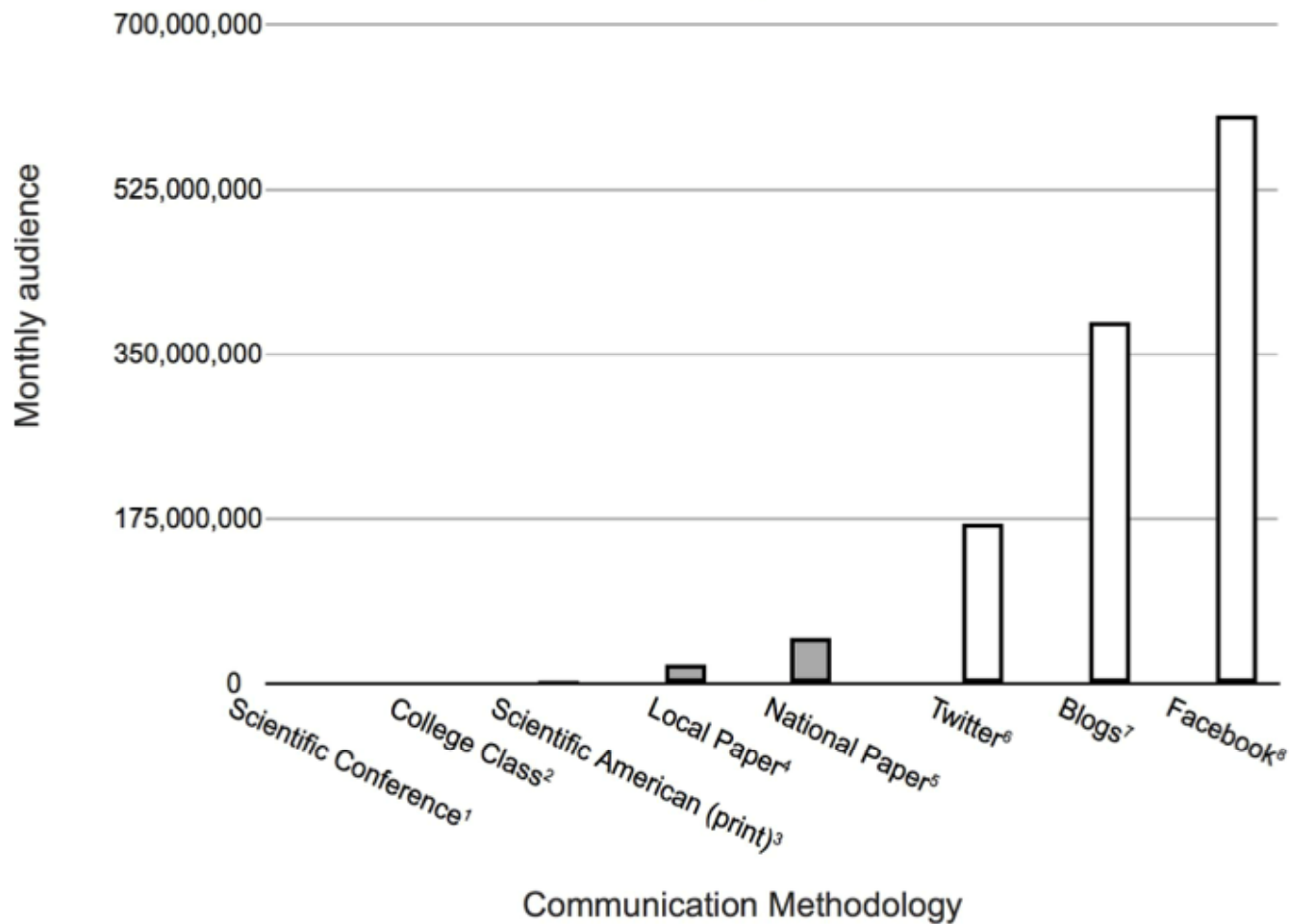
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Perspective

An Introduction to Social Media for Scientists

Holly M. Bik^{1*}, Miriam C. Goldstein^{2,3}





YOU'RE PASSIONATE ABOUT YOUR SCIENCE

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Global Young Academy

The voice of young scientists around the world

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Who We Are



As the "voice of young scientists around the world," the Global Young Academy aims to empower and mobilize young scientists to address issues of particular importance to early career scientists. Current working groups focus on improving Early Scientific Careers, Science-Society Dialogue, Science-Education, and Interdisciplinary Research. [Read more...](#)



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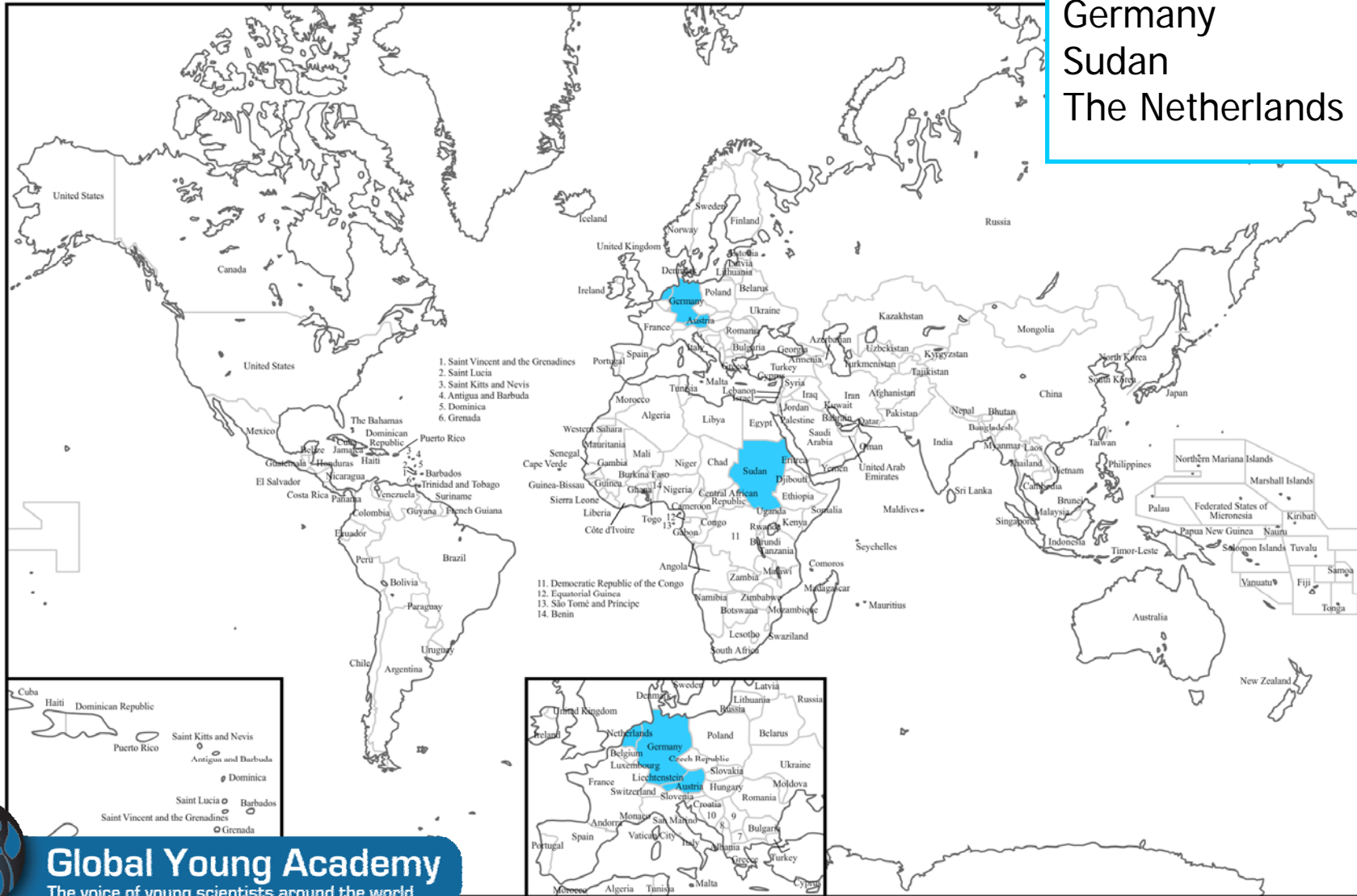
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The GYA is looking for motivated new members from around the world. Due to national holidays and a temporary

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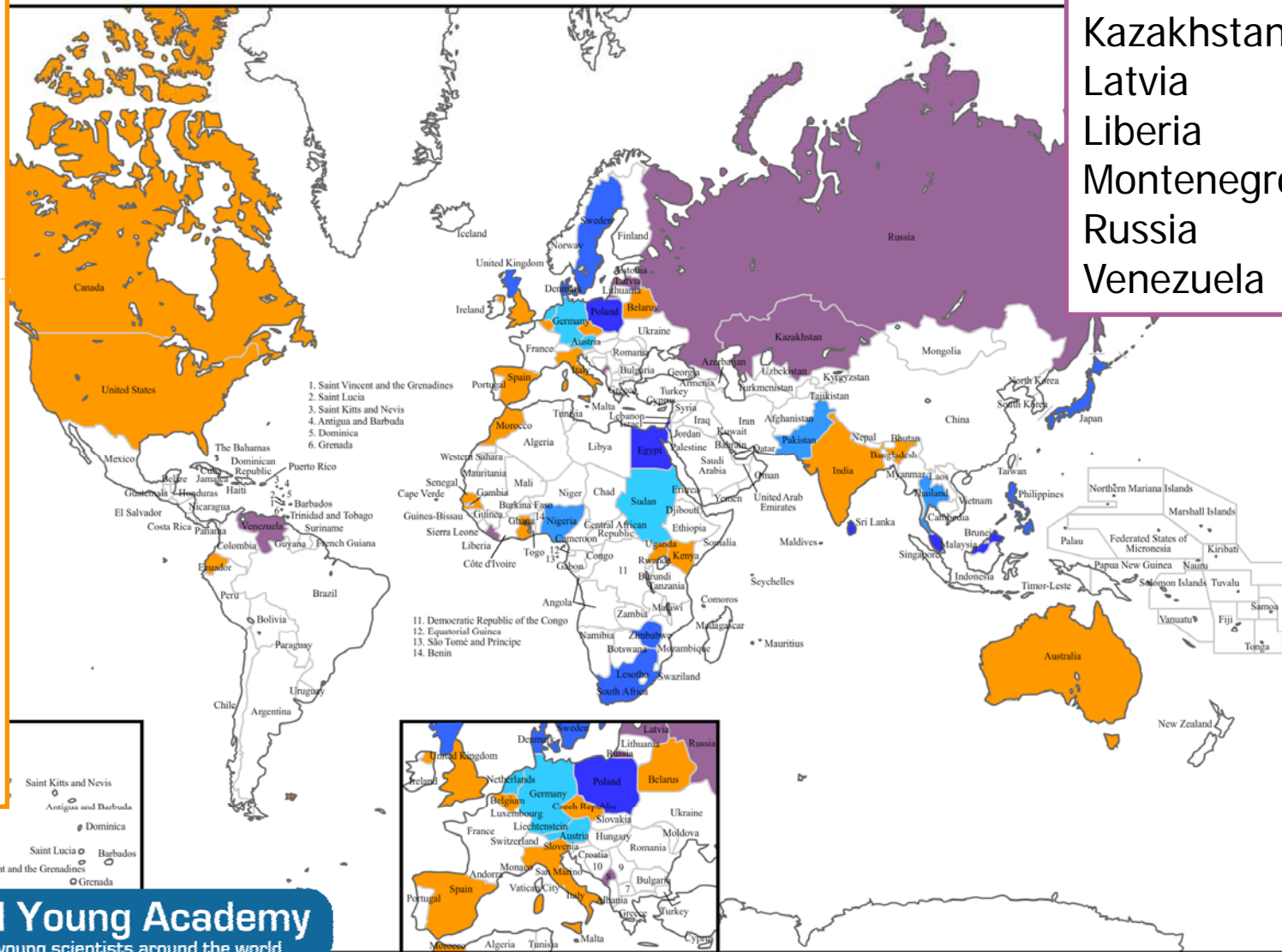
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