

**Welcome Address at the Opening Event of the 4th Meeting of the Steering Group of the OECD-Global Science Forum-Initiative „Scientific Collections International“, 2. Sept. 2009, Dinosaur Hall, Museum für Naturkunde Berlin**

*By Reinhold Leinfelder, Berlin*

Ladies and gentlemen, a sincere welcome to you all, on occasion of what I believe is a very important issue – the challenge to see, and coordinate, scientific research collection as a global resource for solving research and science issues, such as biodiversity, climate, land use, and health, to name just these few. I am glad to see that this topic is supported very strongly, and it is therefore a special pleasure to have you here.

It is a pleasure to welcome Dr. Michael Rottmann, the representative of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, who was really – at least this is my impression - enthusiastic with the idea of discussing, and perhaps implementing, an international mechanism for science research collections. Many thanks for the resulting, substantial, financial and logistic support of this meeting.

Another warm welcome to Dr. Gerhard Husung, Secretary of State for Research and Education of the State of Berlin and many thanks for the interest of Berlin for this workshop.

A great thankyou, connected with a hearty welcome goes to Dr. Frederic Sgard, representing the Secretariate of the OECD-Global Science Forum in Paris - what an enormous effort by you by now! Many thanks for supporting this initiative so intensely!

We are also glad to have the representative of the Berlin OECD office here, another thank you to OECD-Berlin for supporting this workshop.

A big thankyou is also due to Dr. Richard Lane, Science Director of the Natural History Museum in London, and Chair of the Steering Committee of our OECD-Global Science Forums Initiative „Scientific Collections International“. Thanks for pushing the things forward!

A hearty welcome to the other steering committee members, to all other participants and observers of the workshop, especially also from non-OECD-countries, it is a pleasure to have representatives of around 20 countries here today.

I would especially like to thank our organizing team, headed by Dr. Christoph Häuser, coordinator for international affairs at our museum, present chair of the Consortium of European Taxonomic Facilities and Steering Group member of our initiative, a great thankyou to him and his organizing team, who I believe you will get to know much better during this workshop: Dr. Anke Hoffmann, Astrid Faber, Manja Voss, Monika Neumann, Dr. Georg Heiß, Dr. Andreas Kunkel. Without them this workshop would not be possible.

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Let me say just a few additional words as to our common goal - to see and coordinate scientific research collections, which are large scale infrastructures, to a spatially distributed, yet joint global research and documentation infrastructure.

We are convinced that this is important for very many reason, the most important of which is that our global society is challenged by important issues such as the biodiversity crisis, by changes of ecosystems in the course of climate change and landuse change, including health and food issues.

Solutions for such challenges must be both at a local and a global scale, but frequently the global scale is neglected.

Yes, we do probably need new governance solutions for controlling climate change effect or

for providing sustainable use of our nature, and actually, yesterday as well as today two suggestions for potential mechanisms were presented here in Germany: the idea of a world climate bank and today the report on the economics of ecosystems and biodiversity, which is something like the STERN-report for biodiversity. This is to be welcomed.

However, we do not only need political global solutions, we particularly also need to perform a lot of research at a global and integrated scale - no single institution can do this alone today. We are convinced that collection-based research certainly can contribute a great deal to help understand and then solve such problems, but for this we do need a global research infrastructure, a global, transparent documentation and a global exchange of knowledge and capacity building.

Let me give you just the example of natural history collections: our collections here at the museum are already big, even quite big - with more than 30 millions of objects - , but yet we are nothing but a moderate part of a gigantic potential research infrastructure. Natural history collections alone contain already about 1.5-3 billions of objects or object sets. Such a treasure, if better interconnected, could be a huge global brain of nature. The objects and individual collections could be considered as the brain cells, and if we allow synapsis formation among these brain cells - which is to provide and develop a integrated research infrastructure – we will have the best global brain and memory that nature can provide.

We will need such a intelligent research instrument to address questions such as the response of global (and regional) systems to global and regional change, through climate change, land use and pollution. Items to be researched by means of a global collection infrastructure are, for instance, pollution and migration pathways and dynamics, ecospace modelling, ecosystem dynamics and transitions, all of which can only be understood and addressed by using internationally linked collections.

We also need to see and define collections as an important and transparent authentication center for research results , an open-source distributed, but connected global voucher-bank

We need collections to make good, authentic exhibitions for the dissemination and, again, authentication and acceptance of research – interoperability and common standards will help all of us providing the best exhibitions we can do in this respect.

We need to distribute the scientific knowledge related to the collection items as well as collection management across the world, which is very, very important for the north- south dialog, for issues such as access-benefit sharing, for joint capacity building and so forth.

I am therefore convinced that a world research consortium or some other kind of a scientific research collection mechanism is really needed. It will allow us to better access, use, and enlarge facts and knowledge which are already existing, and to document and provide facts, not fiction, as to the research, management and expert challenges of the future.

I thank you all for coming, for your interest, commitment and support, and I am convinced that we will greatly proceed towards a mechanism for a sustainable, transparent and efficient use of all our scientific research collections in the next two days.

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