

POGO-6

Press Release -- November 29, 2004

Leaders from more than a dozen countries, representing the world's largest and most important oceanographic institutions and ocean research programmes, are meeting this week in Brest, France. The meeting is hosted by Ifremer, the French Research Institute for Exploitation of the Sea.

These ocean science leaders are active members of the Partnership for Observation of the Global Oceans (POGO), an independent consortium established in 1999 to promote long-term cooperation in comprehensive understanding and observation of the global oceans. At this conference, POGO leaders will move forward with plans that further the collaborative missions and objectives that are advancing global ocean observation programmes.

More than 71% of the planet is covered by oceans and these oceans are vital to the survival of all life on Earth. It is crucial - now more than ever - to implement an earth system approach, linking the oceans, land, life and atmosphere. As a coordinated organization, POGO has the capacity to implement long-term sustained observations of the oceans that will benefit the oceans and mankind.

Critical needs focus on observations within water, such as measurements from an armada of undulating robots deployed all over the world, measuring various physical and other properties of the oceans such as temperature and salt content. Another type of observation envisaged is a network of observatories situated at critical points around the world oceans, which would measure a comprehensive suite of physical, chemical, biological and geological properties of the water at the bottom of the ocean, and within the entire water column. These in-water observations are seen as complementary tools to ocean observations made globally through man-made satellites in space capable of observing several physical and biological properties of the oceans at the global scale. Since satellite capabilities are typically limited to observing only the surface layers of the oceans, and since they are not able to measure all the critical properties, the leaders of oceanography are dedicated to furthering critical remote sensing by satellites and in-water measurements to complete the observing system. These observations will serve the need for data for various computer models that are designed for understanding and predicting the state of the oceans in the future. Such models are also designed to serve a variety of practical applications, ranging from understanding the role of the oceans in climate change, prediction of long-term climate and extreme weather events, and management of living resources from the sea.

POGO members are continuing their commitment to implementing a comprehensive system for observing the oceans at the global scale. With the strong endorsement of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, POGO has created essential links with many national and international organizations and programmes dealing with marine sciences. The Brest meeting will discuss many important issues facing oceanographers today, including better management and sharing of data and information, the need to tie

ocean observations to societal benefits and applications, capacity building for ocean observations in developing countries. The message from members of POG will be conveyed to the Group on Earth Observations, which will be meeting in Ottawa in Canada at the same time.

POGO leaders see a clear and compelling challenge: to promote and enhance the implementation and integration of global oceanographic activities through an effective international network of major oceanographic institutions and programmes.