

POGO-2 Summary Report

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The Partnership for Observation of the Global Oceans (POGO), a newly-formed organisation that aims to bring together major oceanographic institutions under a single umbrella, held their second meeting at the University of São Paulo, in São Paulo, Brazil, from 28 November to 1 December, 2000. Dr. Rolf Weber, Director of the Instituto Oceanográfico at the University, hosted the event.

Directors and their representatives from major oceanographic institutions from 14 countries (Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, France, Germany, Holland, Japan, Russia, South Korea, UK and USA) attended the meeting. International organisations and programmes such as IOC (Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission), SCOR (Scientific Committee on Ocean Research), the Argo Programme, CLIVAR (CLimate VARIability and predictability), COOP (the Coastal Ocean Observation Panel), GODAE (Global Ocean Data Assimilation Experiment), OOPC (Ocean Observations Panel for Climate) and CoML (Census of Marine Life) were also represented at the meeting. In total, there were some forty participants at the event.

The meeting began with various presentations from international oceanographic projects and programmes with a global perspective. All the presentations focussed on the role that POGO can play in improving the co-ordination, implementation and promotion of major programmes. There were also short presentations from institutions of South America, designed to give a flavour of their activities to the international audience. In addition, there were presentations from some of the POGO member institutions, highlighting the latest developments relevant to POGO activities. There were also reports on action items from the first meeting of POGO, at which it was decided that POGO would encourage and promote the Argo network of autonomous profiling floats and time-series measurements, and initiate an experiment in data exchange.

The main focus of the meeting was on issues pertinent to the Southern Ocean: Global coverage of oceanic observations presupposes adequate coverage in the Southern Hemisphere. Yet, this is typically a difficult task, given that two-thirds of the world's oceans are in the Southern Hemisphere, and most of the oceanographic institutions and nations of the world are in the Northern Hemisphere. The cost of operations, the inaccessibility of the area, and the harshness of the environment limit observations in the Southern Hemisphere. The meeting adopted a declaration to promote observations in the Southern Hemisphere, and to make a concerted effort to identify the gaps in the observations and the means for covering the gaps, in co-ordination with programmes that are active in the area.

The means and ways of promoting training, education and capacity building in oceanic observations also received much attention at the meeting. Several new initiatives were approved by the members of POGO: It was decided to institute a scholarship scheme in collaboration with SCOR and IOC to provide training to scientists and technicians from developing countries on aspects related to global-ocean observations. POGO also decided to co-sponsor a project called SEREAD (Scientific Educational Resources And Experience Associated with the Deployment of Argo drifting floats in the South Pacific Ocean) that has been developed to bring aspects of ocean observations to the school room. The meeting also decided to co-sponsor, and participate in, training programmes initiated by other organisations such as the IOCCG (International Ocean Colour Co-ordinating Group), when overlapping interests exist, and in the Austral Summer Institute Series initiated by the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (USA) and the University of Concepcion (Chile).

The first formal elections of POGO were held at this meeting. Dr. Charles Kennel (Director, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, USA) was elected the Founding Chairman of POGO. Dr. Robert Gagosian (Director, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, USA), Dr. Howard Roe (Director, Southampton Oceanography Centre), Dr. Michael Sinclair (Director, Bedford Institute of Oceanography, Canada) and Dr. Rolf Weber (Director, Instituto Oceanográfico,

University of Sao Paulo, Brazil), were elected Members of the Executive Committee. All elections were by acclamation. These voting members and the Executive Director of POGO (present incumbent Dr. Shubha Sathyendranath) will form the Executive Committee of POGO. The financial aspects of POGO were also discussed. There was consensus that POGO should strive to raise sufficient funds through membership dues to maintain a full-time secretariat and cover the core activities of POGO, and that outside funds would be sought in the future only for specific, targeted projects. The meeting recorded warm appreciation of the exemplary work carried out by Dr. Lisa Shaffer (Scripps Institution of Oceanography) as the interim Executive Director of POGO. It was recognised that her tireless efforts were a crucial element to spinning up the fledgling organisation.

The meeting also discussed the terms of reference of the organisations, and guidelines for membership. It was noted that POGO membership would be open to individual institutions or consortia of institutions. Several members reported that there were initiatives at national levels to form consortia of oceanographic institutions, to promote regional co-ordination and collaboration. This was seen as a very positive step that would facilitate POGO activities. Consortia would allow wider representation in POGO, without causing the organisation to become too unwieldy. Participants from South American countries expressed their interest in forming national consortia prior to seeking formal membership in POGO.

The members decided to hold the next meeting in late Fall, in 2001, at the Bedford Institute of Oceanography, Canada. Two main themes were selected for the meeting. The first one is biological observations. They are more complex, and less automated than physical oceanographic measurements. The types of measurements required are also variable, depending on the objectives of the study. The needs of programmes with climate-change and carbon perspectives, and those that target biodiversity studies in the marine environment will be examined, with the objective of establishing what POGO can do to promote the observations that are required. The second theme is to be time-series observations. Time-series observations will provide the necessary complement to the Argo programme, which depends entirely on a floating array of buoys.