

GEOSPHERE - BIOSPHERE INTERACTIONS

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The International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) which is a federation of about twenty scientific unions covering all disciplines of science and of about seventy national academies, has recently been addressing itself to a very important question of global importance.

"Is the time ripe to launch a cooperative, interdisciplinary, international programme to illuminate the complex and synergistic physical, chemical and biological processes in, the Sun-Earth system that determine its changes? These processes not only govern but are also profoundly influenced by living things - especially by human activity. As the number of humans increases, and their demands on the environment of a finite earth grow, a deepened understanding of anthropogenically induced global change is becoming an imperative of contemporary society".

Sri Lanka is ideally suited as a study case in the Geosphere-Biosphere programme. With a population of over 16 million occupying a relatively small landmass and with the vast majority living in close association with the 'soil', Geosphere - Biosphere interactions are obviously important. Apart from the geographical distribution of health problems caused by the varied compositions of the geosphere, the changes of the geography of the country, induced by large scale anthropogenic activities has also shown an upward trend. Research activities of the

Environmental Geochemistry Group of the Institute of Fundamental Studies focusses attention on these interactions and their direct and indirect effects on the human population.

The ultimate goal of the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (IGBP) would be to assess trends in natural and anthropogenic global change anticipated for the next 50 - 100 years, thus providing governments with information needed for the development of long-term plans to relieve the ever-increasing stresses on human life-support systems.