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THE INTERNATIONAL PERMAFROST ASSOCIATION: CURRENT INITIATIVES FOR CRYOSPHERIC RESEARCH

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The International Permafrost Association (IPA), founded in 1983, has as its objectives to foster the dissemination of knowledge concerning permafrost and to promote cooperation among persons and national or international organizations engaged in scientific investigation and engineering work on permafrost. The IPA's primary responsibilities are convening International Permafrost Conferences, undertaking special projects such as preparing databases, maps, bibliographies, and glossaries, and coordinating international field programs and networks. Membership is through adhering national or multinational organizations or as individuals in countries where no Adhering Body exists. The IPA is governed by its Executive Committee and a Council consisting of representatives from 26 Adhering Bodies having interests in some aspect of theoretical, basic and applied frozen ground research, including permafrost, seasonal frost, artificial freezing and periglacial phenomena.

This presentation details the IPA core products, achievements and activities as well as current projects in cryospheric research. One of the most important core products is the circumpolar permafrost map. The IPA also fosters and supports the activities of the Global Terrestrial Network on Permafrost (GTN-P) sponsored by the Global Terrestrial Observing System, GTOS, and the Global Climate Observing System, GCOS, whose long-term goal is to obtain a comprehensive view of the spatial structure, trends, and variability of changes in the active layer thickness and permafrost temperature.

A further important initiative of the IPA are the biannually competitively-funded Action Groups which work towards the production of well-defined products over a period of two years. Current IPA Action Groups are working on highly topical and interdisciplinary issues, such as the development of a regional Palaeo-map of Permafrost in Eurasia, the integration of multidisciplinary knowledge about the use of thermokarst and permafrost landscapes, and defining permafrost research priorities - a roadmap for the future. The latter project is a joint effort with the Climate and Cryosphere initiative (CliC) and a contribution to the International Conference on Arctic Research Planning III (ICARP III). The product stemming from the effort will consist of a journal publication listing permafrost research priorities and putting them into context.

In all of these activities, the IPA emphasizes the involvement of young researchers (especially through the Permafrost Young Researchers Network and APECS) as well as its collaboration with international partner organizations such as IASC, SCAR, CliC, IACS, IUGS and WMO.

