Scientists all agree that a big earthquake threatens the city of Padang (population 840,000) which sits on the Sumatran coast broadside on to an expected megathrust earthquake. Do we agree on the detail of the threat? Of course not. So should we be talking to Sumatran people about things we don’t fully understand? I think we should. There is an overriding consensus that a great earthquake and tsunami is possible; we all agree on that even though we don’t agree on the detail. On 30 September last year, an earthquake M7.6 shook Padang demolishing whole areas of the city and killing 1200 people. This was not the earthquake we were waiting for, but no one in Padang knew this at the time. The response was not perfect but had there been a tsunami the death toll would have been much smaller than it might have been. Incomplete science would have saved thousands.

Over the entire globe, we can identify cities which are threatened by big earthquakes, we can’t say when they will happen and we can’t forecast their detail but we do know they are inevitable. This information will save lives if we can bring it forcefully to the right people. Medical scientists don’t understand breast cancer properly yet their imperfect science saves lives. Earthquake scientists can do the same.

John McCloskey,
Professor of Geophysics,
University of Ulster, UK

Carlos A. Nobre to receive Alexander von Humboldt Medal
The Alexander von Humboldt Medal, reserved for outstanding scientists from developing countries, has been awarded to Dr Carlos A. Nobre. He plays a prominent role in Amazonian rainforest research, focusing much of his attention on biosphere-atmosphere interactions. Nobre is one of the most respected and influential South American scientists in atmospheric sciences.

Medal lecture: The Fate of the Amazon Forest in the 21st Century. MLI, 17:45 – 18:30, Room D, Convenor: Tuija Pulkkinen

Great Debate, Great Success

About 500 people showed up at yesterday’s Great Debate on the role of science in climate policy making. You may have been disappointed that there was little time for discussion. Therefore, we urge you to join the discussion on the EGU weblog: http://egu2010.wordpress.com, and Twitter. Twitter feed: @egu2010. Please use hashtag #egu2010 in your tweets.

Missed the Debate? See the webstream at: http://www.cntv.at/EGU2010/

Science under Fire

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Roland von Huene to receive Arthur Holmes Medal
Prof Roland von Huene has been awarded the Arthur Holmes Medal for gaining extraordinary international standing in solid earth geosciences. He is also made an Honorary Member of the EGU. Von Huene is a world-class leader in the collection of observational data and has led fundamental new research on the quantification of geological processes such as subduction zones. Medal lecture: Subduction Zone Concepts and the 2010 Chile Earthquake. ML3, 17:00 – 17:45, Room D, Convener: Tuija Pulkkinen.

Water, Ice and Fire: Exploring the moons of our solar system with magnetic fields

Meet the expert in hydrology
This is a great opportunity for a selection of young scientists specialising in hydrology, to meet two established scientists face-to-face for guidance and/or discussion of specific aspects of their current research. The young scientists have all submitted a case on the issue or problem they wish to discuss. This year, we are honoured to have two renowned scientists covering surface and subsurface hydrology research fields: Prof Günter Blöschl and Prof Jesus Carrera. SC6, 17:30 – 19:00, Room 39 & 40, Convener: Elena Toth.

Meet EGU
Division and other Major EGU Officials present at the EGU Booth. Come by to see your division leaders. Discuss anything you want with them. Schedules can be found in the online Meeting Programme.


Jean-Yves Parlange to receive Alfred Wegener Medal
In addition to being made an Honorary Member of the EGU, Prof Jean-Yves Parlange has been awarded the Alfred Wegener Medal for his lifetime achievements in fundamentally improving the understanding and description of geophysical aspects of transport in porous media. Parlange’s collaborators comment on his great enthusiasm and inspiring expertise. Parlange’s outstanding contributions and his tireless dedication to scholarship and teaching put him at the top of his profession. Medal lecture: Wetting Front Instability in Porous Media. ML2, 18:30 – 19:15, Room D, Convener: Tuija Pulkkinen.

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You can reach us in the Press Centre of the Austria Center Vienna. Any comments or contributions are more than welcome.

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