



## INTERNATIONAL

## AAAS, Partners Launch Global Web Site on Sustainability Science

With interest rising worldwide in sustainability science and related social issues, AAAS's Center for Science, Innovation, and Sustainability has launched a new Web site to serve as the hub of an international network in the challenging years ahead.

The site (<http://sustainabilityscience.org>) is an advanced, one-stop shop for scholars, governments, agencies, and others working to understand how humanity can grow and develop in an environmentally sustainable way. It offers a virtual library, discussion forums, commentary, and international listings of events and programs on sustainability. And it does so with a no-frills visual approach that is accessible even to users with limited bandwidth.

"The forum brings together leading scientists from developed and developing countries to begin grappling with some of the most fundamental science questions at the nexus of environment and development," said Vaughan Turekian, AAAS chief international officer.

"Forum: Science and Innovation for Sustainable Development" is an updated and reinvigorated version of a site hosted for several years at Harvard University. The concept grew out of discussions at the path-breaking Friibergh Workshop on Sustainability Science, which drew 24 influential scientists and scholars to Sweden in 2000. They and others had come to believe that biology, chemistry, hydrology, and other individual fields of science, operating independently, had limited ability to chart the dynamic interactions between nature and society. A new, interdisciplinary approach was needed.

The Friibergh workshop gave rise to the Initiative on Science and Technology for Sustainability (ISTS). The Web site originally was seen as a depot for Friibergh documents and deliberations; soon, however, the organizing committee began to envision a bigger role.

The old site—like sustainability science itself—"has outgrown its original construct," said geographer Robert Kates, a 1991 U.S. Medal of Science winner and co-convenor of the initiative. At first, sustainability was defined largely in scientific terms, he explained in an e-mail interview. But after a series of meetings around the globe, it was clear that social issues and issues related to

the interaction of society and nature are just as important.

"The new Forum will give equal prominence to these using at a global level the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals and the water, energy, health, agriculture, biodiversity, and urban sectoral framework of the United Nations," he said.

The effort to bring the Web site to AAAS was led by Shere Abbott, then the association's chief international officer; Abbott and Lars Bromley, a senior program associate in the AAAS Office of International Initiatives, collaborated on the project with ISTS leaders, including Kates and William Clark, an ecologist and key initiative organizer based at Harvard.

Currently, the forum has more than 300 members in 41 countries. That number is expected to jump as word of the Web site circulates and outreach activities restart.

"What I especially value about the commitment of AAAS to the forum is its experience and concern for the next generation of science and technology, both in its Web sites and in its creative programs of introducing young scientists to policy," Kates said. "Sustainability science measures a transition to sustainability in terms of generations. Its task to support such a transition will extend across this century and many of its most productive contributors are still unborn."

### SCIENCE AND SOCIETY

## Ayala's Passion for Knowledge Shines at AAAS Event

Francisco J. Ayala is a trailblazer in evolutionary genetics and an outspoken defender of scientific integrity in public school classrooms. Hana Ayala is pursuing a visionary plan to make tourism, conservation, and science a self-sustaining engine for economic development. They are the archetype of a scientific power couple, traveling the globe to advance their ideas.

But their varied interests are based on a shared belief: Knowledge should be used to benefit humanity. And their passion for knowl-

edge was vivid when they took the stage in the packed AAAS auditorium, 23 March in Washington, D.C., for a 90-minute conversation about their ideas, their work, and their strategies for maintaining marital harmony even with a breakneck travel schedule.

Czech-born Hana Ayala calls her concept Pangea World, after the super-continent that broke apart to form the continents we know today. Thus far, she has focused largely on Panama and Fiji, developing a model to aid local economies by creating financial incentives for conservation and encouraging scientific research. When the plan is realized, travelers will be able to lodge in what she calls IQ Resorts, immersed in exotic settings and a sophisticated scientific milieu.

The partnership between tourism and science may represent "the greatest untapped reserve for funding an exposure to science," she said, "the greatest untapped resource for revolutionizing the business success and quality of the hotel industry, and thirdly, it is also the greatest untapped means of elevating conservation to a powerful economic force."



Francisco J. Ayala (left), AAAS CEO Alan I. Leshner, and Hana Ayala in a salon-style conversation at AAAS.

Francisco Ayala, born in Madrid, is a former Roman Catholic priest and now University Professor in biology, philosophy, and logic at the University of California, Irvine. His work has led to dramatic advances in the prevention and treatment of diseases such as malaria. He served as AAAS president in 1995. In 2001, he won the U.S. National Medal of Science.

"Most mainstream theologians, and most people who have read the Bible thoughtfully, realize that the Bible, it is not an elementary book of biology, or an elementary book of cosmology or of physics," he told the audience. "It is a travesty to interpret the Bible that way."

For more information on the Ayalas and to view the video of their evening at AAAS, see [www.aaas.org/webextras/](http://www.aaas.org/webextras/).

# Science

## AAAS News and Notes

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