

## Letter from the IODP Forum Chair - November 2019

The International Ocean Discovery Program (IODP) has successfully entered its second phase of drilling, with the current IODP Science Plan scheduled to conclude in 2023. Central to the IODP endeavors in this phase is the multi-drilling platform approach to be able to drill in a wide range of environments. Many geoscientists from IODP member nations will have the unique opportunity to experience the sense of scientific discovery through sailing on one of the drilling platforms.

How about IODP beyond 2023? One of the IODP Forum consensus Items (September 2018; Chair Jamie Austin) was visionary: “Multiple planning efforts underway to continue scientific ocean drilling beyond 2023 will eventually require coordination, both to reconsider the extant decadal Science Plan and to evaluate the envisioned mix of drilling platform capabilities, that will be necessary to respond to the expected continued flow of high-quality proposals. The Forum, or its successor, should play an important role in this.”

The above Forum consensus has inspired the international scientific community to work on the first step of a post-2023 program: the whirlwind of writing a new Science Plan. Several international workshops were organized this year—in Yokohama, Vienna, Canberra, Denver, and Shanghai—to discuss scientific priorities and possibilities for post-2023. Early- and mid-career scientists played prominent roles during all of these workshops, with the Canberra workshop setting aside a special session for early career researchers alone. An international working group of IODP scientists, representing all IODP nations and consortia, then met in New York in July to summarize and integrate results of the workshops and to form the skeleton of a very ambitious Science Plan for post-2023, with a timeframe of having the final product available by June 2020.

In September 2019, the Forum delegates had the opportunity to discuss, scrutinize, and alter where necessary the proposed skeleton of the new Science Plan during a very well-attended meeting in Osaka, Japan. The Forum delegates were very impressed with the Plan’s progress and enthusiastically endorsed its development while suggesting it be renamed a “Science Framework,” which better expresses the IODP community’s long-range vision for taking scientific ocean drilling into the mid- 21st century.

The Forum delegates thank the leaders and members of the New York working group for their hard work in developing this Science Framework for post-2023, and applaud the speedy formation of the writing and editing teams. We are looking forward to the final product in mid-2020, as it is necessary for long-range deliberation on the structure of a post-2023 scientific ocean drilling program. The Forum delegates also recognize that the concept and design of the current IODP structure has proved highly successful and provides a powerful possible model to take forward into the next phase of scientific ocean drilling post-2023. There will be challenges, but these can and will be overcome through international collaboration among all member countries.

Finally, on behalf of the Forum delegates, I would like to thank the organizers and participants in the many planning workshops that were held earlier this year. Their hard work has positioned scientific ocean drilling to flourish for many years to come.

Sincerely,

Dick Kroon  
Chair, IODP Forum