

PREFACE

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There are a growing number of programmes and activities addressing climate change in relation to Africa. Many of these programmes aim to improve understanding of the nature of climate variability and the potential for human systems to adapt to global warming. START, the global change SysTEM for Analysis Research and Training, is one such initiative that is jointly sponsored by the World Climate Research Program (WCRP), the International Geosphere Biosphere Programme (IGBP), and the International Human Dimensions Programme (IHDP). START's collaborative regional research networks and projects target the building of indigenous capacity to undertake global change research in developing countries, providing an important catalyst for collaboration between research scientists and natural resource management groups in Africa. Many of the scientists that contributed to this issue are involved in various START activities in different capacities. It is our hope that the

ideas developed here will further strengthen the goals and activities of those working at the science-policy interface in Africa.

Through its special issues, *Climate Research* (CR) has promoted interest in regional and national implications of climate change impacts. For instance, CR SPECIAL 3 addressed issues of vulnerability and adaptation to climate change in African ecosystems. This SPECIAL updates and sharpens the focus on climate and environmental change in Africa, with emphases on paleo-, historical, and future climates and their environmental effects.

The papers in this SPECIAL are a measure of the success of the international global change programmes. More importantly, they are a good measure of the dedication of young African scientists involved in research on environmental issues pertinent to Africa. It is our hope that this material will be widely disseminated and used as a basis for further research on climate and environment in Africa.

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