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## Serving Science and Society into the New Millennium

A Symposium



May 21–22, 1997  
National Academy  
of Sciences  
Washington, D.C.

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**THE LEGACY AND THE PROMISE** To look at both the past and the future of the BER program, the DOE and the National Research Council (NRC) of the National Academy of Sciences cosponsored a symposium in May 1997, entitled "Serving Science and Society into the New Millennium: The Legacy and the Promise of DOE's Biological and Environmental Research Program." The symposium celebrated five decades of achievement by the DOE and its predecessor agencies, often in partnership with the NRC, and explored the promise of its current programs at the threshold of the next century. Speakers reflected on the implications of changing paradigms, enabling research, and science policy on biotechnology, medicine, and the environment, and discussed the BER program directions that could best serve the needs of the Department and society. The symposium was held at the National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D.C.

tlety of global systems continues to challenge DOE scientists today, just as it did their AEC forebears. Global environmental change is sure to remain a major issue for years to come, and efforts to understand the causes and ramifications of this change will continue to receive the highest priority. One of the central global issues is the impact of greenhouse gas emissions. International agreements on such emissions, aimed at preventing dangerous climatic change, will demand increasing attention to the ecological impacts of environmental change, and the concept of sustainable development will dominate many research and development agendas in the coming years. The BER program will thus expand its research on environmental impact to address the Department's objective of sustainable energy development.



*The pioneers of biological and environmental research within the AEC could hardly have predicted the course BER*

*research would take. Efforts focused on the fate of radioactive fallout would evolve into today's global climate research. Exploratory studies of human metabolism using radiotracers would lead to high-resolution PET and molecular nuclear medicine. And questions raised by early epidemiological studies would ultimately give rise to the Human Genome Project. The next fifty years are equally unpredictable. The future, as usual, promises unknown challenges—and unexpected opportunities. It is certain only that as technology evolves, so will our responsibilities for understanding the impact of our decisions on human health and the health of our environment. And as long as our well-being depends on the wisdom of our choices, the enduring mandate of the AEC will continue to inform the research of the DOE scientists charged with its legacy.*