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**CONTACT:** Margot Dimond  
713-825-0006  
margot@doubledimondpr.com

**ICON EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CALLS FOR DETAILED STRATEGY  
FOR NANO-EHS RESEARCH BY THE FALL OF 2008**

*In testimony to the House Committee on Science and Technology, Vicki L. Colvin said nano community needs "research harmonization" tools to build confidence in managing risks*

WASHINGTON, DC, OCTOBER 31, 2007 – Nanotechnology holds great promise for the future of cancer therapy and water treatment, but concerns about the safety of nanoproducts may limit these important technological developments, Vicki L. Colvin said in comments to the U.S. House Committee on Science and Technology.

Colvin, executive director of the International Council on Nanotechnology (ICON) and director of the Center for Biological and Environmental Nanotechnology (CBEN) at Rice University, was an expert witness at today's hearing on Research on Environmental and Safety Impacts of Nanotechnology, specifically relating to the current status of planning implementation under the National Nanotechnology Initiative (NNI).

Colvin said at the outset that she was providing her individual opinions, but that her opinions had been informed by her association with ICON, which is currently working with diverse stakeholders from around the world on nanotechnology research needs in the areas of environment, health and safety (EHS) and hosts a free, searchable database of EHS research papers.

"There is an urgency to nano-EHS research that affects the entire NNI investment," she said. "Innovation in nanotechnology is being threatened by the uncertainty about its risks. We need this innovation more than ever right now."

She called on the National Nanotechnology Initiative to bring forth a detailed strategy for nano-EHS research no later than fall 2008.

"Going from a climate of uncertainty to one of confidence in managing nanotechnology risk is a massive undertaking that will take years to fully develop. It will also take careful planning and coordination among agencies in this government and abroad. The ultimate plan would be most effectively organized by two, maybe three, overarching outcomes that stakeholders agree will give us more confidence in managing risks," she said.

Colvin emphasized the importance of unifying "researchers' languages, methods and materials," which she referred to as "research harmonization" tools.

"If you fund five teams to help understand nanotube toxicity and they get five different answers you are actually worse off because your research creates uncertainty rather than combating it," she said.

She sees a real need for government intervention. "If left to ourselves we might harmonize as a community in five to ten years – too long to wait for nanotechnology's innovation. The good news is that the U.S. government can, if it is thoughtful about the mechanisms, help researchers fix this problem quickly and for relatively low cost."

To read the full text of Colvin's remarks, visit <http://icon.rice.edu>.

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### **About ICON**

The International Council on Nanotechnology (ICON) is an international, multi-stakeholder organization whose mission is to develop and communicate information regarding potential environmental and health risks of nanotechnology thereby fostering risk reduction while maximizing societal benefit. The council has evolved into a network of scholars, industrialists, government officials and public interest advocates who share information and perspectives on a broad range of issues at the intersection of nanotechnology and environment, health and safety. We maintain a public portal for information on nanomaterial environment, health and safety (EHS) at <http://icon.rice.edu>.