

# **Minutes**

## **ICSU GeoUnions (GUs) Steering Committee Meeting**

**Friday, 6 November 2015, 14:30 - 18:30**

**Saturday, 7 November 2015, 9:00-11:00**

**Venue:** Lindquist Room, Adriatico Guest House, The Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP), Trieste, ITALY

### Present:

IAU: Secretary General Piero Benvenuti (only on 6 Nov.)

ICA: President Menno-Jan Kraak (Vice Chair of the Steering Committee) (only on 6 Nov.)

IGU: Vice President Joos Droogleevers Fortuijn

INQUA: President Allan Ashworth and Secretary General Brian Chase

ISPRS: First Vice President Orhan Altan and Congress Director Lena Halounová (only on 6 Nov.)

IUGG: President Michael Sideris, Secretary General Alik Ismail-Zadeh (Chair of the Steering Committee), and Immediate Past President Harsh Gupta

IUGS: President Roland Oberhänsli

URSI: President Paul Cannon

### Guests:

Madhu Chandra (URSI),

Edith Madela-Mntla, Director, Regional Office for Africa, ICSU (only on 6 Nov.), and

Stefania Sparnocchia, Secretary General, International Association of Physical Sciences of the Oceans / IUGG Association (only on 6 Nov.)

Apologies from Rainer Horn, IUSS President.

Alik Ismail-Zadeh chaired the meeting. Menno-Jan Kraak and Alik Ismail-Zadeh took the Minutes.

### **1. Tour de Table**

Participants introduced themselves.

Alik Ismail-Zadeh presented briefly the history of GeoUnions consortium as a network of representatives of the international scientific unions of the International Council for Sciences dealing with Earth and Space sciences. The idea of the informal consortium was discussed by the Presidents of IUGS and IUGG in Sapporo, Japan, in 2003. The GUs established a Steering Committee in 2004 (in Paris, France) to promote the sciences worldwide, to communicate and to coordinates scientific activities of individual unions, and to speak on behalf of GUs members to ICSU Executive Board, ICSU Members and its interdisciplinary bodies and at international level, especially to the United Nations organizations and other global stakeholders.

## **2. Approval of the Agenda.**

The Agenda was approved.

## **3. Approval of the Minutes of the 2014 GeoUnions Steering Committee meeting in Auckland, New Zealand.**

The Minutes were approved

## **4. Updates by the Unions**

### **IUGS (R. Oberhänsli)**

Negotiations with UNESCO Earth Science & Disaster Risk Section regarding the International Geoscience Program (IGCP) and the outreach program Global Geoparks (GGP). The new structure of the UNESCO office as well new statutes and bylaws were prepared during the last year and endorsed in spring by the UNESCO Executive Board. They shall be voted on by the UNESCO General Conference on 10 November 2015 in Paris. IUGS was invited on a short term to second this endeavor in the plenum.

ICSU awarded IUGS a grant to hold a workshop on Resourcing Future Generations, which was held successfully in Namibia. Participants with background in geoscience, economics and social sciences from academia, industry and governmental units worked on a report “Resourcing Future Generations – A Global Effort to Meet the World’s Future Needs Head-on” and produced a one pager “Materials for a Low-Carbon Energy Future” designed for policy makers.

IUGS points out the importance of cooperation with GeoUnions. Especially in the context of the Future Earth program but also for inter- and transdisciplinary education. And endorses continuation of the IUGG effort with the workshop on Earth and Space Science education at ITCP.

### **URSI (P. Cannon)**

The meeting cycle is still based on three years but in each of the two years following a General Assembly, regional flagship meetings are held. Early-career Commission Representatives have been successfully introduced. The Secretariat has been expanded with additional Assistant Secretary Generals.

### **IUGG (M. Sideris)**

The 26<sup>th</sup> General Assembly was held in Prague, Czech Republic, 22 June – 2 July 2015. Union Associations decided to organize more joint activities during general assemblies in the future, as they conduct their own scientific assemblies in between the general assemblies and may organize more specific sessions at the scientific assemblies. Change in Statutes & ByLaws: Union Associations may introduce an individual membership program, IUGG as a union will stay with National Membership. Any scientist can now become a member of Union Associations but positions in the IUGG Executive and Finance Committees are reserved only for scientists from National Member countries. A permanent Council has been introduced to allow votes in-between assemblies.

### **INQUA (A. Ashworth)**

An executive of mostly new members is now in place following a very successful congress in Nagoya, Japan. The new executive is looking forward to being an active participant in the ICSU GeoUnions and with organizations such as PAGES. Early career scientists organized a successful congress in the intercongress period and have another planned for 2016 in Reading, U.K.

### **ISPRS (L. Halounová)**

The ISPRS Commission structure has changed, from 8 down to 5. The meeting structure has also changed: ISPRS Congress including General Assemblies are held in ‘Olympic years’. New meeting type - geospatial week brings together workshops in odd years. Symposia of Commissions take place in ‘soccer years’. The next General Assembly will be held in Prague in 2016 (12 – 19 July). All ISPRS

event papers are publicized in two types of proceedings: (1) the International Archives of the Photogrammetry, Remote Sensing and Spatial Information Sciences include the papers, whose abstracts have been reviewed; and (2) the ISPRS Annals of the Photogrammetry, Remote Sensing and Spatial Information Sciences (<http://www.isprs.org/publications/annals.aspx>) comprise the papers, which have been double blind reviewed. ISPRS publicizes also two journals: the ISPRS Journal of Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (<http://www.isprs.org/isprsjournal/>) and the ISPRS International Journal of Geo-Information.

Orhan Altan raised a question of how GeoUnions solve the issue when a Union's bank account should be moved to the country of the residence of new Secretary General or Treasurer. The Unions exchanged the views on this topic.

#### **IGU (J. Droogleever Fortuijn)**

Successful Conference in Moscow and Geography Olympiad in Tver (Russia) in 2015. A new Charter on Geography Education is in preparation in collaboration with EUGEO and EUROGEO, to be proclaimed at the International Geographical Congress in Beijing, August 2016. A Task Force for Young and Early Career Geographers is established. IGU returns to biennial meetings (even years); odd years with thematic conferences. Next General Assembly will be held in Beijing, China, in August 2016.

#### **ICA (M.-J. Kraak)**

ICSU membership since 2014 / Started a new International Journal of Cartography (Taylor and Francis) / International Map Year 2015-2016 endorsed by UN-GGIM (more information at <http://mapyear.org>).

#### **IAU (P. Benvenuti)**

Reform of the IAU structure, from 12 to 9 thematic division / Strategic plan is a strong guidance for research / Activities during the International Year of Light and Light-based Technologies (IYL 2015) / Project “Exoplanets”

Alik Ismail-Zadeh mentioned that the IUSS President could not participate in the meeting this time because of their involvement into the International Year of Soils (IYS).

### **5. Relationship between GeoUnions & ICSU**

Discussion about the information flow within ICSU, interactions with ICSU Secretariat. Paul Cannon initiated the discussion by expression the view that ICSU should be the servant of the National Members and Union Members – and not the other way around. He wished to understand whether this was indeed so. Comments from Piero Benvenuti (IAU): what is the role of ICSU? To run scientific programs (such as Future Earth) or to facilitate Scientific Unions activities. Alik Ismail-Zadeh mentioned that the ICSU's major role is to develop multi- and trans-disciplinary research programs and to link the Unions and National Members in working on the programs. The GeoUnions would insist on a close cooperation between the ICSU scientific programs (such as Future Earth) and the GeoUnions.

### **6. ICSU Grants Programme**

Three proposals have been submitted by GeoUnions in 2014. ISPRS submitted a grant application “Global Land Cover (GLC) Information for Future Environmental Change and Sustainable Development” to enhance Future Earth program by global geo-information. IUGG submitted a grant application “Future of Earth and Space Science and Education” to promote geoscience education at all level. This application was supported by 6 ICSU Scientific Unions, 2 interdisciplinary bodies (IRDR and WCRP), 2 ICSU Regional Offices (ROA and ROLAC), the Group on Earth Observation (GEO), and the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) of UNESCO and IAEA. IUGS submitted a grant application “Resourcing Future Generations”.

One of three applications (namely, the IUGS application) was awarded by ICSU. Alik Ismail-Zadeh reported that frustrating was the fact that the ICSU CSPP and the Executive Board did not take into account the interest of 12 international Partners of “Future of Earth and Space Science and Education”

proposal and rejected the application based on superficial comments from a CSPR member. In 2015, ICSU awarded only 4 grants (EUR 111,000 in total) and a considerable amount of the funds allocated to this program by the ICSU budget for 2015 (EUR 300,000) was unused. Despite the negative assessment of the IUGG application, the ICTP-IUGG conference “Future of Earth and Space Science and Education” was successfully held in Trieste, Italy, from 2 to 7 November 2015 (<http://indico.ictp.it/event/7723>).

Also it was discussed that ICSU considers revising its Grants Programme by introducing short-term and long-term projects. GeoUnions leaders agreed to develop a joint grant application for long-term project on Earth and space science education.

**Action point:** Piero Benvenuti (IAU), Orhan Altan (ISPRS/ICSU), and Alik Ismail-Zadeh (IUGG) to develop a draft proposal on science education covering three regions related to the ICSU Regional Offices and to IAU regional centers. One of major topics could “big data” science.

## **7. GeoUnions and ICSU Regional Offices**

GeoUnions discussed their interaction with ICSU Regional Offices and logistical assistance of the Offices in organizing various scientific, education and outreach events. Edith Madela-Mntla mentioned that GeoUnions (IUGG and IUGS as examples) have developed very good cooperation in the Africa region, and the Regional Office remains committed to assisting with the activities of Unions.

## **8. GeoUnions and disaster risk science efforts**

ICSU and ISSC established in April 2014 an ad-hoc group of experts on disaster risk reduction (DRR) to get prepared for the U.N. Third World Conference on DRR held in Sendai in March 2015. The major outcome of the ad-hoc group was the synthesis paper which can be found at [http://www.icsu.org/science-for-policy/disaster-risk/documents/DRRsynthesisPaper\\_2015.pdf](http://www.icsu.org/science-for-policy/disaster-risk/documents/DRRsynthesisPaper_2015.pdf). A summary for policymakers was distributed to the representatives of national governments attending the U.N. conference in Sendai.

Based on the efforts, the ad-hoc group submitted a paper to Nature which was published in June 2015: <http://www.nature.com/news/global-risks-pool-knowledge-to-stem-losses-from-disasters-1.17751>

Alik Ismail-Zadeh mentioned that the ad-hoc group consisted of representatives of GeoUnions, IRDR, and Regional Programs on Natural Hazards and Disasters. The next step is to link the initiative with governments to ensure that scientific assessment of disaster risk is implemented by UN and national governments.

Orhan Altan mentioned the successfully completed Disaster Risk and Management Cooperative Projects of ISPRS with GeoUnions and UNOOSA, which results could be downloaded from the web-pages:

[http://www.isprs.org/documents/centenary/booklet/Geoinformation\\_for\\_Disaster\\_and\\_Risk\\_Management.pdf](http://www.isprs.org/documents/centenary/booklet/Geoinformation_for_Disaster_and_Risk_Management.pdf) and <http://www.un-spider.org/sites/default/files/VALIDPublication.pdf>

## **9. International Year of Global Understanding 2016**

Joos Droogleever Fortuijn reported on the recent development related to the International Year of Global Understanding (IYGU; <http://www.global-understanding.info>). IYGU addresses global sustainability of local actions and the cultural different pathways to a sustainable world. Sustainable development is a global challenge, but solving it requires transforming the local. After the UNESCO General Assembly endorsed the International Year to become a United Nations Year, ICSU, the International Social Science Council (ISSC), and International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences (CIPSH) jointly announced that 2016 would be the International Year of Global Understanding (IYGU). The IYGU Secretariat is located in Jena, Germany (Director: Benno Werlen). IYGU actions are via Research, Education and Awareness. The opening ceremony will be held in Jena on 2 February 2016.

## **10. Future Earth and contribution of GeoUnions**

Roland Oberhänsli (RO) initiated a discussion on this program and presented the recent paper “Geosciences for Future Earth Research” ([http://icsu-geounions.org/files/Geosci\\_FE.pdf](http://icsu-geounions.org/files/Geosci_FE.pdf)) written by experts of several international organizations including GeoUnions. This paper is a commentary on the contents of the three themes, nine subthemes and 62 research priorities as distinguished in the Future Earth’s Strategic Research Agenda 2014 (<http://www.futureearth.org/media/strategic-research-agenda-2014>). The comments in this paper also point to the issues where solid Earth science expertise may help to improve the scientific quality of the potential outcomes of the research agenda, in line with the Future Earth 2025 Vision that aims to link disciplines and knowledge systems to achieve its goals. Michael Sideris was curious to know how influential the paper is. Roland Oberhänsli informed that the paper was e-mailed to ICSU and Future Earth Program officers. Paul Cannon asked whether Future Earth was itself consequential, for example, was there proof that this ICSU programme had influenced national funding bodies to provide related funding to their scientists. Joos Droogleever Fortuijn asked about expected outcomes from Future Earth. Allan Ashworth asked who established the Future Earth Program and who will fund it. Alik Ismail-Zadeh described briefly the history of the program and told that Future Earth is considered to be financially supported by the Belmont Forum (<http://www.belmontforum.org>), a group of major world funding agencies.

Alik Ismail-Zadeh proposed to prepare a summary of the paper, which could be sent to new officers of the Future Earth Program.

**Action point:** Roland Oberhänsli prepares a summary (3-4 pages) of the paper “Geosciences for Future Earth Research” and distribute to the GeoUnions officers for comments. The final summary is to be sent to the Future Earth officers as an opinion paper by GeoUnions.

## **11. Web page of the GeoUnions**

Alik Ismail-Zadeh presented the web-page and explained how it could be updated. Particularly it was decided to place the paper “Geosciences for Future Earth Research” on the GeoUnions website.

## **12. Election of Vice Chair of the GeoUnions Steering Committee**

Allan Ashworth (INQUA) agreed to become Vice Chair for the next two years.

## **13. Next meeting of the GeoUnions Steering Committee**

As the ICSU Scientific Unions Meeting will be held in Paris, France, on 11-12 April 2016, it is agreed that the next meeting of the Steering Committee should be scheduled on 9 or 10 (preferable) April 2016 in Paris, France. Alik Ismail-Zadeh and Allan Ashworth will take care of the organization of the meeting.

Alik Ismail-Zadeh was thanked for organization of the GUs meeting and the conference.

## **14. Other business**

Roland Oberhänsli mentioned that IUGS introduced a new Émile Argand Award and invited GeoUnions to nominate experts to honor an active senior geoscientist of high international recognition and of an outstanding scientific record.

The meeting was closed at 11:00.

A group photo was shot.



*Group photo of the participants of the GeoUnions meeting on 7 November 2015:*

(left-to-right) Madhu Chandra, Allan Ashworth, Harsh Gupta, Brian Chase, Joos Droogleever Fortuijn, Alik Ismail-Zadeh, Michael Sideris, Orhan Altan, Paul Cannon , and Roland Oberhänsli.