

# MINUTES

## GeoUnions (GU) Consortium Business Meeting Agenda

19 October 2008

Polana Hotel, Maputo, Mozambique

### Participants (alphabetical):

Ronald ABLER, IGU President (RA)

Orhan ALTAN, ISPRS President (OA)

Margaret AVERY, INQUA Vice-President (MA)

Tom BEER, IUGG President (TB)

Peter BOBROWSKY, IUGS Secretary General (PB)

William CAVAZZA, IUGS Treasurer (WC)

Ian CORBETT, IAU Assistant General Secretary (IC)

Ian DOWMAN, ISPRS First Vice-President (ID)

Alik ISMAIL-ZADEH, IUGG Secretary General (AIZ)

François LEFEUVRE, URSI Past President (FL)

Stephen NORTCLIFF, IUSS Secretary General (SN), joined the meeting at 14:40.

Alberto RICCARDI, IUGS President (AR)

Roger SWIFT, IUSS President (RS), Chair

Guest: Sospeter MUHONGO (SM), Chair of the IYPE Science Program and Director of ICSU Regional office for Africa (for discussion of Agenda topics 7.5, 7.6, and 8)

### Schedule

11:10 – 13:10 business meeting

13:10 – 14:40 lunch

14:40 – 16:10 business meeting

16:10 – 16:20 coffee break

16:20 – 19:15 business meeting

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

### 2. Approval of Agenda

FL suggested we add the following topic to the Agenda of the BM: “ICSU Interdisciplinary Bodies”. It was agreed to discuss the topic under Agenda item # 5.5.

### 3. Review of Minutes and Actions of GU Meeting (Paris, 11 February 2008)

Each topic of the Minutes was reviewed.

Topic 4 (Dues structure). IC reported that GU sent ICSU an agreed response to the ICSU report on dues structure, but ICSU did not respond to the comments. IC is concerned that the definition of the ‘dues’ is not sufficiently clear. He suggested we set up a group of people drawn from the Unions to clarify the issue and to prepare a clear and generally agreed definition of ‘the dues’.

This group could meet now in Maputo if at all possible. PB suggested that GU could not accept the recommendation on Union dues, because ICSU never replied on our comments.

Topic 5 (ICSU grant application), to be discussed under Agenda item #7.6.

Topic 6 (INQUA statement on Climate Change) no progress has been made after the Paris meeting.

Topic 7 (GeoUnions Open Forum), to be discussed under Agenda item #9.

Topic 8 (GeoUnions Science Activity), to be discussed under Agenda item #7.

Topic 11 (ICSU GA)

PB emphasized that the Union and National Members Forums will be held at the same day. Catherine Brechignac promised not to hold the meetings simultaneously, but it is not the case.

RS: Why don't the National members (representing all scientific disciplines) and Unions members have their meeting together?

ID: There should be transparency in communication between Unions and National Members.

RA: suggested to have independent meetings for the first part of the same day and a briefing about activities from each other.

**ACTION:** PB at the Union Forum or at the ICSU GA (under item 5 of the Agenda) will make a motion to do not hold two Forums in parallel but split them in time to give a chance for Union members as well as for the National members to hear each other.

The Minutes of the GU BM in Paris was accepted.

#### **4. GU Reports**

FL for **URSI:**

During its August 2008 GA URSI adopted several resolutions, which could concern other Geo-Unions.

*Creation of an Inter-Commission on a Working Group on Natural and Human-Induced Hazards and Disasters.* The objective is to take advantage of the URSI competences in the use of remote sensing and other data to provide information on disturbed regions and their environment, population, short-term, long-term risk and emerging risks (linked, for example, to climate change). There are opportunities of interactions and collaborations with committees from other Unions (ITU, GEO, ISRPS), and Interdisciplinary Bodies (COSPAR).

*Establishment of URSI Regional Networks* through the development of networks of radio scientists to support capacity building in radio science in developing countries. Actions are in progress around India. Other actions are being initiated around: South Africa, Egypt, Peru and SE Asia.

*Creation of an Inter-Commission Working Group on Radio Science Services* with interactions to be developed with ITU and with other Unions (ISPRS) and organizations (GEO, IEEE, ...) on the use of passive and active radio services

*Formation of an inter-Commission Data Committee:* (a) to provide an oversight of URSI data interests; (b) to provide an effective interface with other ICSU data communities, including overarching groups such as GEOSS (Global Earth Observing System of Systems), the proposed WDS and the Committee on Data for Science and Technology (CODATA), which URSI recently joined.

It is proposed that the initial membership include the current WDC, FAGS and ISES representatives, together with representatives proposed by the Commissions.

URSI White papers may also interest other Geo-Unions.

- *Solar power satellites* (issued in June 2007)
- *White paper on wireless communications and health* (in progress)
- *The Remote Sensing in all its aspects from the development of measurement methods, sensors, means of transmission, processing data and result analysis* (new project, in collaboration IUT-R which has already forecast to write a report on the subject and which has made a call to scientific organizations).

**PB for IUGS:**

International Geological Congress was held in Oslo, Norway, in August 2008. New IUGS Executive Committee elected. IYPE is wrapping up for 2008. The next annual EC meeting will be held in Brisbane, Australia, in January 2009.

**MA for INQUA:**

The executive meeting was held in Turkey in the end of March 2008. John Clague will send a short report.

**RA for IGU:**

IGU Congress. New executives. In 3 weeks the new executive committee will meet. He considers that the Union should focus on 2 –3 major topics.

**IC for IAU:**

International Year of Astronomy ([www.astronomy2009.org](http://www.astronomy2009.org)). Special ceremony should be held in Sydney and a launch event on 15-16 January in UNESCO Paris. Reasonable sponsorship of the program by nations and organizations. Media is very interested in IYA and is already preparing special programmes. GA will be held in mid August 2009 in Rio de Janeiro. President-elect will take an office. IC becomes a GS of IAU. New IAU Executive Assistant (Vivien Reuter) in the Paris office. IAU has enhanced its capabilities to give early warning of the orbits of space objects for their possible collisions with the Earth. AIZ commented that IUGG GeoRisk Commission has an expertise in this area as well. Contacts between each group of experts should be encouraged.

**OA for ISPRS:**

ISPRS Congress was held in Beijing at the beginning of July 08 with more than 3600 participants. New officers of the council were elected. Chinese government showed a great interest to the Congress. Regional Representatives for 3 world regions were elected. Disaster management was one of the major issues of the Congress and during the JBGIS (Joint Board of the GeoInformation Societies) an ad hoc Committee on Risk and Disaster Management was formed. 100 anniversary of the Society; ISPRS will celebrate its centenary foundation in Vienna on 4 July 2009 with a series of actions. Beijing Declaration (suggested by the Chinese Government) was approved by the GA and announced by a “Press Declaration” in the presence of the former Minister of Science and Technology of China and some about 30 media partners. ISPRS asked the other members of the Joint Board to endorse this “Declaration” and allow to use their logos in further publications regarding “Beijing Declaration”.

**TB for IUGG:**

IAVCEI (International Association for Volcanology and Chemistry of the Earth Interior) held its Scientific Assembly in Iceland in August 2008. D.R. Congo, Ghana and Morocco became ordinary members of the Unions, and the Royal Society of London paid their subscription. The EC meeting was held in Karlsruhe in August 2008. Electronic Geophysical Year and International Heliophysical Year are programmes of IUGG. IUGG set up a new Union Commission for Data and Information to provide a synergy of IUGG Associations on the topic of data and information. IUGG issued a statement supporting the FAGS services. The Union established links with the ICSU Regional offices in Africa and Asia and the Pacific. In 2009 most Union Associations will have their Scientific Assemblies. IUGG suggested we organize a joint IGU-IUGG symposium on hazard in Melbourne on the occasion of the IUGG GA in 2011. All GU interested in this topic are invited to join.

RS for IUSS:

Council meeting in Brisbane. Soil Exhibition. King of Thailand (Princess is a soil scientist) is a patron of the Day of Soil in the country. EGU is setting up the section Soil.

## **5. Preparation of the Union Members Forum**

PB: ICSU proposes many new initiatives; they are taking too many responsibilities in relation to the available money. ICSU competes with UNESCO in establishing international global programs. He proposes the point for discussion: what is the philosophy of ICSU?

IC: Major concern – no target audience for ICSU reports. Do ICSU reports have any impact (e.g., OECD and UN reports have had a great impact on society and governments)?

TB: It is true that some initiatives are very active and successful (e.g. IPY) and some of them inactive while scientific topic is important (e.g. SCOPE). He considers that ICSU provides a little funding and budgets projects to get them active. ICSU spreads seeds and not all should give a successful growth.

PB: When ICSU changed its name from the International Council of Scientific Unions to the International Council for Science, it was a sign of the change in policy related to Unions.

RS: For any particular project, it should be clearly determine: who is working on the project and who is benefiting from the project.

AR: We are a part of the same organization (ICSU). Uri Shamir, as a GeoUnion representative in ICSU, should report on the ICSU activities more frequently.

ID suggested meeting the new Executive Director of ICSU and telling him of GU concerns on the ICSU Secretariat operations with the Unions.

TB: set up a review committee to look up the representations of the Unions in ICSU committees.

MA suggested that such a review committee could be composed of representatives from ICSU, Unions, and National members.

**ACTION:** SN will speak at the Union Members' Forum regarding the role of Unions in ICSU interdisciplinary committees.

### **5.1 Hazard (IRDR)**

FL: initially ICSU suggested that the Program should bring together only natural and social scientists. URSI proposed engineering sciences (remote sensing) to be included in the Program. Finally it was accepted but it seems it is just on the paper and not in reality. Collaborations need to be engaged between ISRPS, URSI and if possible ITU before talking about a new interdisciplinary body.

TB: Being a member of the ICSU Panel for Hazards, he described some details of the program and the links with other communities (e.g. social scientists). He considers that IRDR Programme is quite important because the IYPE will terminate in 2009 and its Geohazards program can continue in its new dimension as a new major ICSU program.

IC questioned: who is going to pay for the activity? Who is going to make sure that governments will pay attention to the outcome of the Program? There are too many parallel activities in the area.

TB: UN ISDR will take an action role, ICSU will provide science.

PB: the ICSU Panel on Hazards did not ask Unions on the feedback. What is the GU position on the topic?

ID: We need a close coupling with social and engineering sciences.

### **5.2. Ecosystem services (ECHW)**

TB: IUGG is puzzled with the program. It was mixed up with Health. What happened with Health (SHWB)?

RS: ICSU Secretariat sent us a 200-page report and gives a short time to reply.

RA: presented some historical events in the development of the Health Program. Health started by social sciences.

ID: Health group is quite active research topic of GU.

**ACTION:** ID will ask for clarification regarding the two ICSU activities: ECHW and SHWB.

### **5.3. Scientific Committee on Information and Data (SCID), World Data System (WDS). The place of Federation of Astronomical and Geophysical Services (FAGS) in WDS/SCID and the role of GU in SCID/WDS/FAGS**

AIZ reported on the meetings he attended (CODATA meeting in Kiev and joint meeting of WDCs Panel and FAGS Council). IUGG concern is the role of Unions in the new ICSU structure SCID. He

explained the relationship between SCID as an ad hoc committee supervising ICSU on the topic of data and information and two other bodies of ICSU: old CODATA and newly proposed WDS.

SN: He thinks that the role of Unions is to evaluate the WDS.

IC: Norris was a chair of the ad hoc committee, and IAU commented on the report intensively. Our member on SCID cooperated with the Union. It is on the individual level.

PB: we would like to have representatives of Unions on the Committee.

MA: Unions can nominate best people from technical point of view. She considers that there is a communication problem with ICSU.

SN: what will be the outcome from setting up the new committee (SCID)?

**ACTION:** AIZ will ask for clarification of the role of Unions in the new SCID and WDS structures.

#### **5.4. Involvement of GU into the ICSU Regional Offices activities**

TB: He does not see a role of Unions in the ICSU regional offices. They work closely with national members.

AIZ: IUGG works now closely with two regional offices: ROA (2 ongoing IUGG projects) and ROAP (1 ongoing ICSU project).

SN: IUSS was asked to provide names of soil scientists working in Africa and we sent the information to ROA.

AM: INQUA works closely with Sospeter Muhongo.

AD: ROA is organizing a workshop for the ISPRS/GU SHWB grant.

SL: He participated the IHY (International Heliophysical Year) event in Africa and saw a big interest of African scientists to research programs related to geosciences.

SR: He thinks that the Regional Offices are trying to copy the activity of the ICSU Secretariat in Paris.

**ACTION:** MA will speak at the Union Members' Forum regarding the scientific and operative autonomy of the ICSU regional offices.

#### **5.5 ICSU interdisciplinary bodies**

Like the expansion of other activities by ICSU, there was a general feeling of too many interdisciplinary bodies being formed and no closure of the old ones. All agreed the topic of SCOPE is very important but perhaps SCOPE itself is not the body to do the work. However, SCOPE

should be free to plan its own future and, if it wishes, seek ICSU recognition again at some future date.

FL: noted that three new Interdisciplinary Bodies are proposed at the ICSU GA, which is a non sense. For several reasons the research time allocated to topics of general interest is more and more limited. The multiplication of the number of structures generates dispersion.

## **6. Nominations to ICSU Committees. Elections of ICSU Officers**

Discussion on the candidates for ICSU President and Vice President positions.

Request for nomination of members for IRDR arrived before the approval of the new program.

PB requested clarification from RA about the nomination by IGU of a candidate to the ICSU Executive Board.

RA clarified this was not for the geoscience cluster but rather for social sciences.

PB then reiterated request that our nominated candidate, Uri Shamir, increase the representation of remaining GU in ICSU affairs. Most candidates thus far were from IUGG. Similarly he proposed a monthly update from Uri Shamir would be appreciated to keep us better informed.

## **7. Focus Themes of GU: brief review**

### **7.1. Cities and Megacities (IGU)**

Report should be sent by RA

### **7.2. Desertification (IUSS)**

Inactive.

### **7.3. Natural and Human-Induced Hazards and Disasters (IUGG)**

TB presented a short report on the activity of the team who cooperates with the IYPE team of Geohazards.

### **7.4. Earth and Health (IUGS)**

With no funding it is impossible to run science. Several participants agreed with the statement.

It was decided to discontinue inactive focus themes and to concentrate on a few topics: Hazards, Health, and Geoscience in Africa.

## **Geoscience in Africa (IUGG, report by A. Ismail-Zadeh on behalf of U. Shamir)**

AIZ reported that IUGG granted USD 30K to three projects related to Africa: geohazards, hydro-meteorological hazards, and eGY in Africa. IUGG invites other GU to contribute to the projects.

SM: We asked several Unions (Uri and Ed were present) to contribute to our activities. Latest development: we are finalizing the research programmes. We hope to finalize them by the end of this year.

FL: URSI pushes national committees to participate in the ROA research activities.

SM: ROA is growing and today 24 members belongs to ROA. ROA is coordinating research activity in Africa. A network was established by the Geol Union of Africa.

### **7.6. Health and Well-Being. SHWB Workshop, ICSU-ROA, January 20-22, 2009, Pretoria, South Africa**

ID: Meeting in Pretoria is on-going activity. Basically the ICSU money will be spent to get GU people to the meeting. African scientists are invited to attend the meeting.

SM: it was easy for us to organize the meeting in one hotel. African involvements – 44 countries. We were overloaded by applications. ROA decided to ask for the CV of the people who want to attend and will select the best candidates (Unions can do this selection). If we can identify the people, we could get some funding to the African people.

### **8. International Year of Planet Earth and GeoUnions activity**

SM: IYPE shortcoming is a bad fund-raising for science program. What will be the legacy of the Year? Now it is too late to raise money. We consider that the best way is to produce a series of the books (by SPRINGER): 6 books are under various stage of development. We have a problem with the following topics: Ocean, Climate Change, and Soil.

SM also told that in the ICSU Regional Office they work for all Africa and not only for ICSU Member countries. The number of countries involved in the ROA has increased from 5 to 24.

PB suggested we have some instructions on how to use the small amount of funds.

TB: His frustration was that the money did not come at the time they were needed.

SN: Because of no funding, we cancelled the IGC symposium on Soil and hence no book is considered to be published. He emphasized that national participation in IYPE is quite important. For example, France brought soil science on the IYPE arena, prepared excellent materials for schools.

PB: What is the role of GU in the continuation of the IYPE for the next 10 years?

SM: The continuation of the program is under evaluation. Once the IYPE Board decides on the topic, we should think on the role of GU in the program.

SM requested the GU:

1. to assist in capacity building (PhD level) in Africa. He mentioned the case of the International Mathematical Union who approached the ROA and offered math courses for university students in Africa;
2. to assist in acquisition of equipment, libraries, and funds for African projects. He mentioned that the European Commission will contribute to the this activity, and that the GU could be intermediaries;

3. to promote multi-dimensional approach for Africa research (including one developed country and more than one African country); and
4. to promote activities (specific projects) of your Associations and Unions in Africa.

**9. (a) GeoUnion Open Forum. (b) Discussion on the Stresa International Symposium on remote sensing. (c) Tools and services provided by GU to their members (FL how to get information from GU regarding tools).**

(a) AIZ described the idea of GU Open Forums. The meeting should differ from professional meetings organized by GU so far. They should bring together prominent natural and social scientists dealing with the Earth system and planets, policy-makers, representatives of governmental and non-governmental organizations, industry, insurance, and mass media. The Forums should be topical meetings, and the topics are to be of high relevance to society. Latest achievements in geosciences should be presented at the meeting provoking an interest of governments, industry and media to geoscience.

Several Unions commented the proposal. It was also discussed that GU should not have a joint congress. IUGG with IGU will organize a forum on the topic of hazards and invites other GU to join the initiative.

(b) ID presented briefly the development of the Stresa International Symposium on Remote Sensing of Environment. The GU are invited to attend the meeting.

(c) FL asked on how to get information from GU regarding specific tools.

**10. ICSU/UNESCO (actions to be taken to push UNESCO to use the expertise of ICSU Scientific Unions)**

Discussion on how UNESCO and ICSU should cooperate. It was suggested to have a list of GU contacts with UNESCO bodies (**ACTION:** PB will collect the information).

**11. ICSU proposal to discontinue involvement in SCOPE**

It was decided that the topic of environmental research is quite important, but the Committee itself is not functional anymore.

**12. Next GU meeting**

IGU volunteered to chair the next GU meeting.

**Others**

- ICSU Grants Program

PB: We would like to have a clear understanding of how the ICSU grants are awarded. How much money ICSU allocates for the Grant Programmes for the next 3 years. It should increase in real values.

**ACTION:** At the Union Members' Forum WC will ask for clarifications regarding the procedure of grant awards and annual allocations (for the next 3 years) to the Grant Program.

- Canada involvements in the evaluation of ICSU and its Union activities.

AIZ asked PB about the Canadian request to IUGG about membership dues structure.  
PB explained the point.

The meeting concluded 19:10.

Submitted by Alik Ismail-Zadeh, "scribe".