

2012-2016 Report from Saudi National Committee – International Geographical Union

As of the beginning of the year 2012, Saudi National Committee has amassed all its abilities to perform the outline of its activities that should attain its goals, basically to emphasize the role of geography as a development-directing science. These activities have increased in number to 37. Some of these activities are manifested in the following axes:

1- Strengthening relations and communications with International Geographical Union and its specialized committees:

This activity was manifested in circularizing all results, resolutions and recommendations taken by the Union, its committees and its specialized groups to members of Saudi Geographical Committee, and geographical society in K.S.A. Circulars sent within the period of 2012-2016 to Saudi geographers, individuals and institutions, amounted to (846) circulars.

Saudi national committee always emphasizes the significance of the activities of Union's committees and groups which are considered rich source for international expertise and most recent methodologies and applications on the international level, which should be emulated in the work of national committees and specialized groups. Therefore, we find that these reports of international committees and groups (especially those of CGE & IGU- Urban commission) represent rich sources for national committees and specialized groups. Several committees and specialized groups within Saudi geographical society did utilize the programs and researches of these international committees and action groups. It is hoped that this utilization should lead to new horizons of joint cooperation between Saudi national committee and I.G.U. committees, so that it can develop the concept of national geography into action utilitarian to individual and society. On our part, we have tried to continue that cooperation to contact the groups: The commission of Hazard and Risks to attend and participate in the eleventh symposium of geography departments at the Saudi universities entitled: "natural hazards and their impact on development", which was held at the University of Taiba in Medina City, Saudi Arabia during the period 11-13 March 2014. Two requests were received from Dr. M. M. Sheikh and Prof. Haruyama to participate in the symposium.

There were strong communications between Saudi national committee and I.G.U. during the office of Vallega, especially those concerning earth planet committees, however these communication grew less then totally stopped after his death. However, there are now

communications with the Saudi national committees such as those regarding details of I.G.U. executive committee's meetings, reports on joint action between I.G.U. and some international associations and organizations, such as social sciences international report, which we believe that they are very useful in highlighting world view about many topics that concern geographers. Therefore, in this concern, we would like to extend our thanks to Union's President, Professor Vladimir Kolossov, and Union's General Secretary, Professor. Mike Meadows for circulating such reports.

Continuing M.O.U. between Saudi Geographical Society and I.G.U., the Society has endeavored to translate the newsletter issued by I.G.U. into Arabic, and linking it with the SGS site. Number of newsletters translated and uploaded on the site amounted to 29 issues. Translating the new newsletter issue from I.G.U. website is underway.

Saudi Geographical Society has translated the first version of the International Geographical Union website, and after adjusting the Union site the SGS added the appropriate adjustments on the translation. But after the third amendment no changes have been done to the translation.

The SGS started a communication with the IYGU and a memorandum of understanding was signed to establish a regional center in Saudi Arabia, which began operations in the KSU and in Nepal, and we have a plan to continue the implementation of the program of lectures and seminars in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Sudan and the Gulf states.

A Lecture entitled "The role of the Department of Geography at the service of society in America" was delivered by Dr. Vang Shaw - Head of the Department of geographic information systems at the University of Texas in the United States- at King Saud University 25/1/2015.

2- Strengthening joint activities with Saudi scientific institutions:

Believing in the disability of achieving goals except through cooperation to change some negative images that geography faces, Saudi national committee has extended its arms for cooperation with individuals and institutions thus giving hope it will help in understanding geography, effecting the role of the committee (society) in participating in local, territorial and national development program.

National committee's International reputation has become an impetus for increasing the effectiveness of Saudi Geographical Society on the national level as it has become a resort for aid request in several causes that concern the Kingdom geographers such as responding to media campaigns against geography, discussing any results to shut down or shrink some geography departments in the Kingdom, or discussing the issue of recruitment of geographers with concerned governmental establishments. The national committee has even become a resort for

support of some international causes that concern geographers all over the world. The society has also become an intended place for geographers to activate their scientific accomplishments, and inventions and turning them into products that benefit the community such as Smart tools to determine the direction of Makkah for passengers out cities.

The society has managed to win the trust of some public and private establishments when they asked for advice for some of their work, such as Ministry of Education's request for "Society's view about geography education methodology in public education. A M.O.U. was signed between the SGS and the department of education Affairs in the Ministry of Education for cooperation in developing a training program for teachers of geography in Riyadh City.

3- Follow up the development of Geographers Number in the Kingdom:

The National Committee represented by the Saudi Geographical Society, before the end of the academic year, every four years, distributes questionnaire to the concerned department in ministry of Education and Geography departments in the kingdom to determine the status of geography in the kingdom. 2015 questionnaire results show that there is an increase in the number of geography teachers in education of all its levels (preparatory, primary and secondary) specially females, compared with a former questionnaire held in 2011 (increase percentage amounted to 12.4%), which requires more effort to communicate with these increasing numbers. However, for university education, geographers in all levels (faculty members, lecturers, demonstrators, technicians) reached 317 members, which indicates tendency towards decrease (39 members compared to 2005). This decrease may be related to the shutdown of some geography departments such as the Geography department at King Khaled University, or stoppage of admittance on bachelor level in Al-Qassim University). Coordination between the SGS, the concerned departments and the Ministry of Civil Service succeeded in the re-opening of these departments in 2015.

4- Building –up Bridges of Scientific Communication with National and International Academic Institutions:

The Saudi geographical society has cooperated with several establishments in holding public lectures, symposia or exhibitions as follows:

- 1-The SGS organized and effectively participated in organizing the symposium of Geography departments in the Kingdom universities in 2014. Efforts are going on to hold the next symposium in 2016 or 2017.
- 2-The Society has started making extensive contacts with the preparatory committee to view some opinions about the 6th Arab geographical conference which was supposed to be held at autumn 2011, in Damascus.

Efforts are going on to hold the next conference in 2016 or 2017 in Sudan.

3- The SGS continues to implement a national campaign to protect the environment in general education schools and social service centers in the Kingdom. So far 28 episodes and lectures were held in several regions of the Kingdom.

4- Scientific day: the development of human resources in spatial information technologies, organized by the Saudi Geographical Society in cooperation with the Idrisi educational company, 2013, was held at King Saud University.

5- A Panel Discussion: "Urban and demographic changes in the city of Medina," was held on the occasion of the selection of Madinah city as the Capital of Islamic Culture for the year 2013. The Discussion has been held in 2014 at Literary Club in Medina.

6- A Panel discussion on "the risk of floods" was held in 2014 at the University of Salman Bin Abdul Aziz at Al-Kharj city.

7- Scientific day: the development of human resources in spatial information technologies, organized by the Saudi Geographical Society in cooperation with the Idrisi educational company, dated 20/11/2013, was held at King Saud.

8- Holding a symposium under the title "Touristic Potentialities in Tabuk Region" in Mayslon hotel, Tabuk City.

9-Lecture: "Saudi relations and the European Union: the current situation and the future WHAT CHOICES", has cast a lecture by Dr. Valentina Kostadinova, the lecture was held on 30-4-2014 at King Saud University.

10- Lecture: "the objectives and results of the participation of King Saud University in the scientific journey to the South Pole," was delivered by Prof. Dr. Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah ben Laboon from the Department of Geology, Faculty of Science, King Saud University, the lecture was held on 28-5-20014, at King Saud University.

11-Lecture: "Strengthening the values of academic integrity (in coordination with the Department of Geography). The lecture was delivered by Dr. Falleh Rabiean al-Qahtani, dated 06/06/2014 at King Saud University.

12-Lecture: "Education and health services for the villages in the Saudi countryside: a model for the western region" has been delivered Dr. Mohammad Mishges, from the Department of Geography at King Abdulaziz University. The lecture was held on 07/05/2014 at cultural club in Al- Ghat City.

13- Holding a symposium under the title "Teaching Geographical information systems in geography sections in bachelor stage" at Faculty of Arts for Girls, King Faissal University, Faculty of Arts for Girls, Dammam

14 - Holding a symposium under the title " Dictionary of Geographical Terms" at King Faissal Center for Islamic Researches and Studies in Riyadh.

15- A Seminar on "geography education in Saudi Arabia" was held in cooperation with the education office in the ministry of education in Riyadh City, 2016.

5- Participation in some causes related to geography which the kingdom undergoes:

Saudi national committee exerts its utmost efforts to activate society's enlightening targets through familiarization with the related problems which the kingdom may undergo, explain the geographical aspects of these problems and show the best means for facing them. Examples of these are:

- A Panel Discussion: "The Future of the Arab countries in light of the Arab Spring: Cooperation or repulsion" which took place in 2013 at King Saud University.

- A panel discussion: "The role of geography and its contributions in the science of comparative religion", which took place in 2013 at Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University.

- Holding a symposium on "Al-E'iss earthquakes-Medina region" in cooperation with Taiba University in Medina, in which specialized geographers, geologists and civil defense specialists participated. A program about the same issue was shown in Ektessadiya satellite channel under the title " Ecoes".

- Holding a lecture under the title "facing the natural risks" at prince Salman Social Center in Riyadh

- Holding a symposium on "An experiment of measuring rain water" in cooperation with prince Sultan Ibn Abd El-Aziz Center for water, environment, and desertification researches in King Saud University.

- Holding a symposium under the title "Ibn Khamis : a symbol of geography symbols in the Peninsula" in cooperation with art club in Riyadh city on the occasion of commemorating Sheikh Abd Allah Ibn Khamis.

- A lecture titled "Management of floods in Jeddah city" was delivered, by Princess, Dr./Masha'el Mohammed Al-Saud, using space technology, and geographical information systems.

- The Iranian project and the Cooperation Council for the Arab Gulf States. A Lecture delivered by Dr. Ibrahim bin Abdullah al-Shaalan, King Saud University, 2015.

-The role of Individual differences for manpower strategy in assessing the value of the state: a study in political geography. A lecture delivered by Dr. Hosah Al-Saif at King Saud University, 2015.

6- The efforts on enrichment of scientific and cultural publication move:

Saudi Geographical Society releases many scientific issues as follows:

- 1- A series of geographical researches- its issues have reached 112 numbers up till now (at the average of 4 issues a year)
- 2- A series of geographical studies- its issues have reached 25 numbers (at the average of 2 issues a year)
- 3- Arab magazine for geographical information systems- Nine volumes including 17 issues, each issue includes three researches were released in addition to other chapters about conferences, book reviews, and related news.

Some of these issues numbers have obtained international and local prizes.

The Society also releases educational series as follows:

- 1- Geographical newsletter (two issues a year) which is concerned with geographical society in K.S.A.
- 2- Cultural newsletter (two issues a year) which is concerned with presenting vital geographical subjects in a simplified and easy way to educate the society with the concept of geography, its importance and subjects.
- 3- A series of informative books on the cities and countryside of K.S.A. and concentrate on the Kingdom's places of geographical and touristic attraction (Four Issues were released).
- 4- There is a new series under formation dealing with publishing thesis approved from geography departments in the K.S.A.

The Society issues from time to time, series and specialized books which are related to certain occasions such as:

- 1- Issuing cultural season's series, this concentrates on publishing the books on symposia and lectures held by the society.
- 2- Issuing a series (every five years) on the results of scientific trips made by the society.
- 3- Issuing special books about Saudi and Arab geographical characters such as the book released about Professor/Abd Allah Youssef Al-Ghoneim, of Kuwait University.

7- Annual Cultural Programs:

Saudi geographical society has started since the year 1999 in organizing annual cultural programs which include public lectures, and symposia by the average of four activities per academic year that may be increased in some years. The period 2012 -2016 cultural program covered important topics such as:

- A lecture titled "Revival of manual industries in support of tourism and rural development: products of soap stone at "Awdhakh as an example".

- A lecture titled "Climatic changes"
- A lecture titled "National urban observatory: policies and indicators"
- A lecture titled "Electrical rationalization and its relation with thermal retention".
- Workshop: Prospects of eco-tourism in Saudi Arabia.

Often, each annual general assembly's meeting of the Saudi geographical society is accompanied by a scientific meeting specialized in one of the topics of general interest which emphasizes the applied, utilitarian and technological horizons of geography. Number of these scientific meetings numbered since 1990 till 2016 to 13 scientific meetings.