The 33rd International Geographical Congress, Beijing, China, August 21-25, 2016
“Shaping Our Harmonious Worlds”

The 33rd International Geographical Congress was held in Beijing China, on August 21-25, 2016. The IGC 2016 was organized by the Geographical Society of China and Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research, Chinese Academy of Sciences. 8 years ago, Geographical Society of China won the bid of the International Geographical Congress 2016 on the International Geographical Congress 2008 in Tunisia. The theme of the 33rd IGC is “Shaping Our Harmonious Worlds”. Through academic exchanges and communications on geography, the congress aims at promoting the harmony between humankind and nature, respecting the nature and cultural difference, and leading geographers from all over the world to conduct the researches on global understanding, future earth and sustainable development in a profound way.

Opening Ceremony, Plenary Hall, CNCC

The Congress began with the Opening Ceremony held at the China National Convention Center (CNCC), on August 22. Yanhua Liu, Co-chair of the 33rd IGC Organizing Committee, Counselor of the State Council, China, Vladimir Kolosov, President of the International Geographical Union (IGU), Dahe Qin, Co-chair of the 33rd IGC Scientific Committee, Academician of Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), Wei Shu, Executive Secretary of the China Association for Science and Technology (CAST) and Jinghai Li, Vice President of the International Council for Science (ICSU), Vice President and Academician of Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) successively delivered speeches on the opening ceremony. Many well-known and influential scientists were also present at the congress, which included Chinese academicians Bojie Fu, Changming Liu, Du Zheng, Ying Wang, Dadao Lu, Anthony Yeh, Tandong Yao, Peng Cui, Fahu Chen, Jun Xia, and Vladimir Kotlyakov, Honorary President of the Russian Geographical Society, Nikolay Kasimov, First Vice President of
the Russian Geographical Society, Jean-Robert Pitte, President of Société de Géographie France, Alexander Murphy, Former President of AAG, Douglas Richardson, Executive Director of AAG, Michael Meadows, Secretary-General of IGU, Ronald Abler, Past President of IGU and IGU Vice Presidents, Prof. Dietrich Soyez, Prof. Joos Droogléeven Fortuinj, Prof. Elena dell'Agnese, Prof. Yukio Himiyama, Prof. Iain Hay, Prof. Jarkko Saarinen, Prof. Ram Babu Singh, etc. The opening ceremony was chaired by Chenghu Zhou, Secretary-General of the 33rd IGC Organizing Committee, Vice President of the IGU, Academician of CAS. During the last part of the ceremony, the outstanding individuals of the 13th International Geography Olympiad were awarded the gold medals. The best score was achieved by the team of Australia.

262 sessions were organized during the congress, consisting of 156 thematic sessions proposed by 41 IGU Commissions, 44 sessions which focused on 5 key topics: “Geographical Sciences and Future Earth”, “Climate Change and Global Understanding”, “Urbanization and Sustainable Development”, “Environment-Health and Social Welfare” and “Geography in Different Cultures”, 42 forums, symposiums, workshops, keynote lectures and special sessions, such as “Forum for Think Tank of International Scientists Union of ‘the Belt and Road Initiative’”, “Forum for Resources and Environment of Central Asia across Silk Road Economic Belt”, “3rd International Conference on Mountain Environment and Development, ICMED”, “Inheritance and Innovation of Geography: Young Scholar in Action” and 20 business meetings. In about 500 time slots of oral sessions, 2600 presentations were made. In parallel to the oral sessions, 1200 posters were presented.
The commissions which organized the largest number of sessions were:

- **C12.15** Geography of Tourism, Leisure and Global Change: 16 sessions
- **C12.11** Geographical Education: 11 sessions
- **C12.39** Urban Commissions: Urban Challenges in a Complex World: 11 sessions
- **C12.11** Political Geography: 8 sessions

During the congress, 9 plenary lectures were given by 10 world-famous scholars, which were:

- *Geographical Sciences and Future Earth: Research for Solutions, from Local to Global Scales* given by Prof. Mark Stafford Smith (Australia),
- *Understanding Chinese Geography: Linking Science and Society* by Prof. Bojie Fu (China),
- *Back to the Future: Reasoning the Territorial Way of Life* by Prof. Woo-ik Yu (South Korea),
- *Urban Dynamics and Geo-diversity: From Theory to Modeling* by Prof. Denise Pumain (France),
- *A 21st Century Agenda to Shape “Our Harmonious Worlds” Through Research on the Geographies of Health and Care* by Prof. Mark W. Rosenberg (Canada),
- *Climate Change and Its Impact* by Prof. Dahe Qin (China),
- *Geography and Future Earth: Perspectives from Africa* by Prof. Michael Meadows (South Africa),
- *Global Understanding for Global Sustainability* by Prof. Benno Werlen (Germany),
- *From Inter-state to Multiscalar Political Geographies* by Prof. Virginie Mamadouh (Netherlands) and Prof. Takashi Yamazaki (Japan).

The lectures focused on global issues regarding future earth and sustainable development, such as climate change, urbanization, environment and conflicts, and demonstrated the great success and considerable contribution of Chinese geography and Chinese geographers to the basic researches and our society.
There were 4299 people who participated in the congress (including 292 for iGeo) and 758 people who attended the pre-congress meetings organized by IGU commissions. They came from 101 countries and regions worldwide, including 2349 participants from China mainland. Attendance by countries and regions (outside China mainland) is presented in the figures below. Thanks to the 3 types of grants offered by IGU and the Local Organizing Committee, more geographers from developing countries, more young scholars from the world were able to attend the congress. 111 researchers from developing countries were awarded the grants, including 28 for IGU travel grant, 18 for LOC all cover grant and 65 for LOC registration fee grant.

Figure I : Countries with more than 30 participants of the IGC 2016
Figure II: Countries with 10-30 participants of the IGC 2016

Apart from scientific sessions of the congress, there were pre-congress meetings organized by IGU commissions, the 13th International Geography Olympiad, exhibition, IGU General Assembly, IGU Centennial Interviews, field excursions (during and after the congress) and several social events.

Several days ahead of the congress, seven pre-conferences under IGU Commissions on GIS, Geographical Education, Urban Challenges in a Complex World, Geography of Tourism, Leisure and Global Change, Political Geography, Health and Environment and Sustainability of Rural Systems took place in various cities of China.

• 17th International Symposium on Spatial Data Handling, August 18-20, Beijing
• IGU-CGE Special Symposium ECNU, August 18-19, Shanghai
• 2016 IGU Urban Commission Conference, August 15-20, Shanghai
• IGU Tourism Commission Pre-Congress Meeting, August 15-18, Nanjing
• International Forum on Frontiers of Political Geography, August 17-21, Guangzhou
• Pre-conference on Shaping Geographies of Health, Health Care and Environment, August 18-21, Xi’an
• Pre-IGC Workshop-Land Use and Rural Sustainability, August 17-20, Xi’an

IGU Executive Committee Meeting was held in Tianjin on August 18-20.

On August 16-21, 292 teachers and students from 47 countries and regions in the world participated in the 13th International Geography Olympiad, which includes written tests, multimedia quizzes and field work tests. The contents of the competition focused on 12 topics including “Climate and Climate Change”, “Economic Geography and Globalization”, “Development Geography and Spatial Unbalance” and others, and 3 skills including map skills (reading, analysis, interpretation and the ability to draw a map), skills of exploring and solving problems, and skills of describing and judging (reading, analyzing, interpreting images, photos, statistics and graphs).
During the congress, the exhibition was also organized. It attracted nearly 40 domestic and international publishers, companies, institutions and organizations, including Springer, Wiley, Commercial Press, Supermap, UNEP, IGU, IYGU, RSA, AAG, RGS, etc. Many recent published achievements and products in the relevant field were presented. In addition, for this congress, Journal of Geographical Sciences launched a two special issues (2016, No. 7, No. 8), Human Geography and other domestic journals made poster presentations, Geographical Research has produced a disc concerning about some geographical ideas and arguments. China Post has published “the 33rd International Geographical Congress” commemorative stamped envelopes. Chinese geographical communities published *The Geographical Sciences During 1986–2015: From the Classics to the Frontiers* (both in English and Chinese versions), *Academic and Social Contribution by Chinese Humanities and Economic Geography Scholars* (both in English and Chinese versions) and a number of other academic monographs.

Left, IGC 2016 Commemorative Stamped Envelope Launching Ceremony in the exhibition area
Right, Books written and compiled by the Local Organizing Committee of IGC 2016

According to the customs of IGU, IGU General Assembly was held during the congress. On the General Assembly attended by representatives from 46 countries, the new national members, IGU Commissions, Task Forces and their chairpersons were approved. The IGU new President and new Executive Committee were elected, and the host city of the International Geographical Congress 2024 was decided (Dublin, Ireland) by vote.

To continue the existing studies on the IGU history, IGU Sesquicentennial / Centennial Task Force in cooperation with the Commission on History of Geography conducted a serial of interviews on 12 influential geographers on August 22-24: Prof. Vincent Berdoulay, Prof. Vladimir Kolosov, Prof. Maria Dolors Garcia- Ramón, Prof. Carmen Delgado- Viñas, Prof. Ronald Abler, Prof. Jean-Robert Pitte, Prof. Aharon Kellerman, Prof. Yukio Himiyama, Prof. Rana Singh, Prof. Dadao Lu, Prof. Dahe Qin and Prof. Michael Meadows.
2 types of the excursions were available to the participants during and after the congress:

One-day local tours in Beijing during the congress:
- Ming Tombs – Great Wall,
- Forbidden City – Tian'anmen Square – Temple of Heaven,
- Hutong Tour – Beihai Park – Jingshan Park,
- Lama Temple – Beijing Zoo(Panda Garden) – Summer Palace

Post-congress field excursions in China:
- Beijing-Chongqing-Yangtze Cruise-Wuhan,
- Beijing-Xining-Qinghai Lake-Lhasa,
- Beijing-Dunhuang-Turpan-Urumqi,
- Beijing-Guilin-Kunming (co-organized by Institute of Karst Geology)

There were three social events organized for the participants:
- Welcome Reception, on the evening of August 21, on the 4th Floor and the terrace of the CNCC;
- New International Charter on Geographical Education, on the morning of August 24, joined by officials, high school teachers, IGU Geographical Education Commission & two European associations – Eugeo and Eurogeo;
- Gala dinner, on the evening of August 23, in the Plenary Hall B of CNCC
The congress came to a close on the afternoon of August 25. Bojie Fu, President of the Geographical Society of China presented the basic statistics and made a summary of the congress. Vladimir Kolosov, the outgoing President of IGU delivered a speech of thanks and confirmed the success of the congress. Then Joos Droogleever Fortuijn, Vice President of IGU announced the IGU and LOC Grant recipients. Michael Meadows and Vladimir Kolosov handed in the IGU Commission Excellent Award 2015 to Commission on Geographical Education; IGU Planet and Humanity Medal was awarded to Prof. Carl Folke, IGU Lauréats d’Honneur were presented to Prof. Ian Burton, Prof. Maria Dolores Garcias-Ramon and Prof. Benno Werlen. Chinese Geography Outstanding Achievement Awards were presented to Prof. Dadao Lu, Prof. Ke Liao and Prof. Cairui Jing. The representatives from the upcoming IGU Regional Conferences and congresses, Matthew Hatvany from Quebec 2018, Ehmet Ertek from Istanbul 2020, Antoine Le-Blanc from Paris 2022, Frances Fahy from Dublin 2024 presented successively the programmes. Then the IGC flag was handed over to Ehmet Ertek, the representative of the Organizing Committee of the 34th International Geographical Congress. At last, Yukio Himiyama, the new President of IGU made a speech.

Left, Prof. Carl Folke was awarded the IGU Planet and Humanity Medal
Right, IGC flag was handed over to the representatives of the 34th IGC

Thanks to continuous efforts and full support from Chinese and overseas colleagues, the 33rd IGC achieved great success and became the largest congress ever in IGU history. Special thanks to the sponsors and supporters, who supported the congress financially, as well as 236 volunteers from universities and institutions in China, who provided the services to participants during the whole congress.

*Provided by the Local Organizing Committee of the IGC 2016
Geographical Society of China*