International Geographical Union
Minutes of the IGU Executive Committee Meeting
Zoom EC Meeting
Thursday, 8th April & Thursday, 15th April 2021

Welcome, Apologies and Meeting Logistics

The online meeting was chaired by President Michael Meadows, who welcomed EC members, Secretary-General R.B. Singh, Past-President Yukio Himiyma, First Vice-President Iain Hay, and Vice-Presidents Elena dell’Agnese, Nathalie Lemarchand, Bojie Fu, Ruben Lois-González, Céline Rozenblat, and Holly Barcus, along with Assistant Secretary-General Pankaj Kumar. Apologies were received from Vice President Barbaros Gonençgil who joined the meeting on 8th April 2021 late. The Executive Committee meeting commenced at 10h00 GMT on Thursday, 8th April and 15th April 2021.

Adoption of the Schedule and Agenda

The agenda was duly adopted.

Minutes

Minutes of the IGU Executive Committee Meeting, held online on 24th November and 8th December 2020, previously circulated and corrected via email, were approved. The French version is to be prepared by Lemarchand.

Organization

4.01 EC meeting schedule 2021
Meadows noted that two EC meetings are to be scheduled before the postponed Istanbul Congress and associated General Assembly. The first of these will be in June and second in the days prior to the Congress in August 2021; both dates and times to be determined. dell’Agnese expressed her hope that a face to face EC meeting may be possible, at least for some EC members, in Rome from 6th to 9th December if the COVID-19 situation allows.

4.02 General Assembly 2021
Meadows reaffirmed that the next IGU General Assembly (GA) will be held online in association with the postponed 34th IGC in August 2021. The minutes of the 2020 virtual GA remain to be finalised and circulated for approval ahead of confirmation at the meeting (Singh). The issue was raised as to how scrutiny of the IGU accounts can be organized, as required by the Statutes, at the virtual GA. Following deliberation, it was agreed that, in line with the statutory requirements, nominations would-be solicited via email to IGU National Committee chairs to constitute a three-person financial sub-committee ahead of the GA. Meadows and Barcus would then email digital copies of the IGU account transactions and other relevant information to the sub-committee who will be required to review these and deliver a report at the GA. In the expectation that a full in-person GA will be possible during the Extraordinary IGC in Paris in August 2022, scrutiny of full details of the IGU accounts can be conducted by a financial subcommittee appointed at the GA itself.

4.03 Executive Committee member reports
Although some activity reports had been submitted, Meadows proposed that all EC member reports should be compiled in time for the next EC meeting and, as suggested by Rozenblat, a summary be presented to the August GA to focus on activities oriented towards the three target actions highlighted in the IGU Strategy. Meadows reiterated that the Secretary-General’s report on these activities should be concise and avoid assembling long lists of individual EC member’s contributions.
4.04 IGU accounts
Barcus reported briefly on the IGU account held at Macalester College. Annual dues payments and disbursements to Commission and Task Force chairs were proceeding smoothly. Macalester is in the process of establishing a tracking system for all online transactions and moving to further streamline the system. Meadows reported that the IGU account in South Africa should remain open as it proves helpful in paying for restructuring and maintaining the IGU website and for typesetting the IGU Bulletin. Barcus noted some technical/legal challenges for Macalester in regard to USA banking regulations but was confident that these could be overcome. Separating the tasks of Secretary General and Treasurer will be discussed further at the June EC meeting.

Operations

5.01 National membership database
Kumar mentioned that updated address and email lists of IGU National Committee chairs will be sent soon to EC members. Meadows reiterated the need to keep such information updated and identical to that which appears on the IGU website. The National Committee list has now been categorized into Full, Associate and Observer members on the new IGU webpage of National Committee. In response to a query from dell'Agnese, Meadows confirmed that, in the absence of communication from a designated National Committee chair, EC members should seek alternative points of contact.

5.02 Commission and Task Force updates
Himiyama reported that the Commission on Geographical Education has been particularly active and he had shared news of this via email. Meadows noted that, where appropriate, such activities should be reported on the IGU website and can also then be highlighted in the IGU e-newsletter (or annual report). Hay reported that he had received feedback that IGU visibility on different social media platforms need to be increased and noted that some senior active geographers had expressed difficulties in joining an IGU Commission. Further thought needs to be given about the means by which individuals ‘join’ the IGU and that the terms ‘Steering Committee member’ and ‘Corresponding member’ require further clarification. ‘Corresponding member’ could be replaced by ‘Ordinary member’. It was agreed to revisit this issue at the virtual GA. Hay reported that the Chair of the Young and Early Career Task Force had communicated her view that the registration fee for the upcoming 34th Congress is exorbitant and agreed to respond to her in pointing out that it is in line with amounts being charged for other online conferences (e.g. AAG).

5.03 IGU Honors and Awards Committee
Himiyama tabled an email communication received from former IGU President Ron Abler as Chair, IGU Honors and Awards Committee. The committee sought some clarification about the number of recipients to be awarded for the years 2021, 2022 and 2024. The committee has considered nominations for the IGU Lauréat d'Honneur and Planet and Humanity Medal and made recommendations pending approval of the Executive Committee. Himiyama was requested to clarify the issue regarding the number of awardees with Abler and convey to him that the EC accepts the recommendations of the committee. dell'Agnese agreed to chair a sub-committee to consider the 2020 Commission Excellence Award and Singh was requested to collate the 2020 Commission and Task Force annual reports to form the basis of the decision. The sub-committee is scheduled to report back at the June EC meeting.

5.04 IGU website/social media
There has been considerable progress in restructuring the English language version of the IGU website and Meadows presented a quick overview of the main elements. New elements include the opportunity on many of the pages either to send a query, or offer further information using the newly established email address: hello@igu-online.org. Meadows agreed to explore the possibility of an auto-reply when messages are sent to this email address. Other issues still requiring attention include the French and Spanish versions of the core site, and links to social media pages.
5.05 IGU Bulletin
Meadows reported that editing of the Volume for 2017-2018 is complete; a pdf version has been posted on the website and the print file has been sent to Singh who is to arrange printing and distribution. The next volume (for 2019-20) now needs to be prepared and Meadows agree to find an appropriate person to edit this once the material has been collated (Singh, Meadows).

5.06 IGU e-Newsletter
Rozenblat presented a brief report on the new format of IGU e-Newsletter which had been circulated. She commented that the new arrangement is working well, and distribution using three different email address lists was now possible using the services of University of Lausanne (http://syma.unil.ch). She then pointed out the benefits of using these email lists for communications within and outside IGU communities and demonstrated how an administrator can manage, update and create changes in the lists which can manage a large number of recipients. Himiyama suggested, and it was approved, that the e-Newsletter should routinely include a letter from the President’s desk, as had been the case in the past. Meadows thanked Rozenblat for developing the email distribution system and proposed that this be the default means by which members of the EC communicate with the wider IGU community.

5.07 IGU Journals project
Fu tabled a brief report on the IGU Journals project, noting that his team had scrutinized and double-checked all entries. Invalid journals have been deleted and in total 80 new journals (UK 15, China 13, Canada 09, USA 08, Australia 05, Germany 04, Netherland 04, Poland 04, New Zealand 03, Japan 03, and Others 12) have been added to the database. The updating exercise should be complete by the time of the next EC meeting.

5.08 IGU Publications
Hay reported that the Elgar series is progressing well. Singh reported that the Springer series is also in regular production and that the recently published volume ‘COVID-19 Pandemic Trajectory in the Developing World Exploring the Changing Environmental and Economic Milieus in India’ is open access.

5.09 Nomination of candidates to the Governing Board of ISC
EC agreed and finalized the names of two Geographers to be nominated to the Governing Board of ISC. Meadows agreed to collate and submit the nominations on behalf of the IGU.

IGU Conferences and Congresses

6.01 IGC Istanbul 2021
Göncüçil presented a brief report on progress regarding the upcoming Congress and iGeo Olympiad to EC. The closing date for early bird registration is 26th April 2021. After monitoring total paid registrations the local organising committee has proposed an extension of the deadline to 17th May 2021, following which guidelines will be sent to all presenters who have paid their registrations regarding pre-recording of their papers. Pre-recorded presentations, including those of the keynote speakers will be used in the event of technical problems encountered during the virtual congress. Meadows noted the need for participation in the GA to be without fee and that a meeting of Commission Chairs be arranged on the same basis. So far, 57 countries have expressed interest in participating in the IGeo, the final number will be known in early June. dell'Agnese suggested that keynote speakers be encouraged to provide Spanish and French translations of text in their Powerpoint presentations. It was agreed to reserve two slots (of 2hr 15mins each) for the GA in the event that more than one would be needed. Meadows expressed his appreciation to Göncüçil and his team for their ongoing work to make the virtual event a success and suggested that information about deadline dates etc. be distributed as widely as possible.

6.02 Extraordinary IGC, Paris 2022
Lemarchand presented a brief report on arrangements and progress for Extraordinary IGC Paris 2022. She highlighted some of the consequences of lockdown and COVID-19 on the contract, budget
and calendar. The local organising committee (LOC) is organized into a Steering Committee (co-Chaired by A le Blanc, J Verny, N Lemarchand, and the chair of the IGU National Committee for France, A. Cattaruzza), and a number of subcommittees. Communication arrangements are already in progress through IGU Commissions and Task Forces, websites, newsletters, social networks (Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn etc.) and the press. The Congress will be organised at Sorbonne University with 30 venues for parallel sessions and a larger venue for ceremonies at another location in Paris can be arranged if the need arises. With social protection measures in place, the congress will use the services of international students as volunteers providing lunches and coffee breaks. IGC Paris website https://www.ugiparis2022.org/ will be managed by a private partner and includes important features such as Luciole (http://www.luciole-version.com/luciole-en.html), a new typeface developed explicitly for visually impaired persons, bilingual information pages etc.

Projected costs are very dependent on the mode (e.g. entirely virtual, hybrid, entirely in-person) and Lemarchand emphasized the need to confirm this shortly. Meadows suggested that a sub-committee (Meadows, Singh, Hay) meet with the LOC in the near future to provide input to the discussion and enable a final decision to be made regarding conference mode and other issues such as the provision of lunches etc. A tentative calendar of important dates was presented and agreed. Rozenblat suggested involving LIID Future Lab https://liid.fr/?lang=en regarding the scientific exhibits. Singh noted the importance of maximising participation given that this event celebrates the centennial of the IGU and that registration fees should take this into consideration, along with the issue of accessibility in languages other than English.

6.03 IGC Dublin 2024
Nothing to report at this stage.

6.04 IGU Regional Conference 2026 call
Nothing to report at this stage.

Cooperation and Outreach

7.01 FIG
Nothing to report at this stage.

7.02 Night of Geography
Meadows acknowledged the excellent efforts of the organizing committee and noted that the largely virtual format had facilitated substantial participation across world in celebrating the Night of Geography/La Nuit de Géographie on April 9th 2021.

7.03 ISC (including GeoUnions, CODATA etc.)
Himiyama and Meadows had participated in the online Extraordinary General Assembly (eGA) of the ISC from 1-5 February 2021. The main agenda item was revision of the ISC Statutes and Rules of Procedure. Singh regularly attends meetings of the ISC GeoUnions Standing Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction and CODATA.

7.04 CIPSH
The next CIPSH event of relevance to the IGU is the European Humanities Conference on 5th to 7th May 2021. This has been posted under ‘Other Events’ on the IGU website. Himiyama had attended the online CIPSH General Assembly from 14-15th December 2020 together with Lemarchand and former IGU Vice-President Vladimir Kolosov, who was re-nominated as CIPSH Executive Committee member. Luiz Oosterbeek, former CIPSH Secretary General, was elected as its new President. The next CIPSH General Assembly and Conference will be held face-to-face at Odense, Denmark, from 13th to 16th December 2021; Himiyama is planning to attend and, depending on travel restrictions, it may be possible for others to participate.

7.05 UN-GGIM
Singh noted that the IGU report has been submitted and circulated to EC members.

7.06 Eurogeo/Eugeo
The virtual conference is scheduled to take place from 22nd to 23rd April 2021. Meadows is scheduled to represent IGU at the opening ceremony and the event has also been posted on the website under ‘Other Events’.

7.07 EGAL/UGAL
Lois-González noted that the next conference, scheduled for Córdoba, Argentina has been switched to an online meeting. Given the health situation in Latin America, there will be no face-to-face events in 2021 and possibly through to the first half of 2022. Juan Manuel Delgado (IGU Latin America Commission), Yonkers Garces (IGI National Committee in the Dominican Republic) and Lois-González are promoting the candidacy of Santo Domingo to host the meeting in 2023 to be co-organized by Dominican colleagues and others from the Caribbean region. The Postgraduate Congress of Geography (ANPEGE) was held online recently with 3,000 participants. Lois-González had taken the opportunity to make a brief presentation on activities and initiatives of the IGU.

7.08 Other organizations (e.g. AAG, RGS, AGA etc.)
IGU has been approached by the Scottish Geographical Society, in partnership with the Royal Geographical Society, to participate in an online high-level panel discussion to be held in conjunction with COP24 scheduled for Glasgow 1st to 12th November 2021 (still to be confirmed). In China, the ‘Conference on World Geography’ is scheduled to take place immediately after the Istanbul Congress under the auspices of the Asian Geographical Association. Hay reported that the Institute of Australian Geographers and the New Zealand Geographical Society are holding one of their three-yearly joint meetings from 6th to 9th July 2021. Details can be found at: https://www.sydney.edu.au/science/news-and-events/events/iagnzgs2021-conference.html.

7.09 UNGEGN (United National Group of Experts on Geographical Names)
IGU has been approached with a view to establishing a more formal relationship with this body to improve communication. Given that IGU already has a Commission on Toponymy, such an arrangement is appropriate. Meadows has indicated IGU willingness to have formal representation on UNGEGN (Appendix 1) and is awaiting a response.

Other Business

8.01 IGU Statement in support of the community of geographers in France
On request of the Chair of the IGU National Committee for France, a letter of support was sent to French geographers in view of the situation prevailing at certain universities there (Appendix 2).

8.02 Jena Declaration
IGU was approached to support the Jena Declaration, which arose out of a conference hosted by the chair of the Global Understanding Commission. Support for his was agreed some time ago via email (Appendix 3)

8.03 BBC StoryWorks
This ISC imitative is designed to help publicize the work of scientists. It was agreed to invite Professor Yugo Ono (Japan), who was nominated by Japan National Committee, to submit such a ‘story’ and that other possible entries be sought from the IGU community (Singh).

8.04 IYBSSD 2022 (International Year of Basic Sciences for Sustainable Development 2022)
It was agreed that IGU should sign the MOU in support of this initiative, although any possible funding commitment should be capped at US$1000 (Meadows).

8.05 UNESCO-ESD online workshops
Himiyama attended all seven UNESCO-ESD online workshops. He reported that it was quite interesting to see how the UNESCO Division for Peace and Sustainable Development organized the pre-conference workshops for “UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development” in May 2021. The charts produced in the workshops and shared by the EC members might show the essence of its achievements.

8.06 UNESCO Japan Prize
UNESCO Japan Prize, closing date is 30th April 2021. ISC has been approached with a view to submitting a nomination. In relation to UNESCO, Himiyama suggested that the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) April Newsletter be circulated to the IGU community (Singh).

8.07 UNESCO World Logic Day
IGU was approached by CIPSH to offer its support for this event, which is on January 14th each year. Meadows sent a letter of support to the President of CIPSH (Appendix 4).

8.08 International Geodiversity Day
IGU has offered its support for International Geodiversity Day and posted information on the IGU website.

8.09 Community outreach
Meadows suggested that the environmental and sustainability projects of Rotary International’s ‘Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group’ (ESRAG see: https://www.esrag.org/), most of which are community-based, might gain further traction through the network of IGU international contacts. In essence what is envisaged is as follows: where a particular project in a country would benefit from relevant research or expert advice, the project director could approach the chair of the National Committee (or the chair of a relevant IGU Commission depending on the topic) with a view to soliciting input on a voluntary basis. This would fall into ‘community outreach’ for the IGU, with the added benefit that many Rotary environmental projects are in developing countries. Further information is to be requested from Rotary before confirmation (Meadows).

Adjourn
The meeting adjourned at 13.30 GMT on Thursday, 15th April, 2021.