

## **IGU. ADVISOR BOARD AND SPECIAL COUNSELOR**

Although the significance of the IGU has been reaffirmed in recent years, with increasingly numerous and frequent congresses/conferences, a greater presence of countries from the South, and its increasingly active work in the ISC and other transdisciplinary international bodies, the Union continues to face ongoing challenges.

Among these, three require ongoing work and a concerted effort to continue strengthening International Geography. On the one hand, there is the organizational issue. Of the 110 countries with some form of connection to the IGU, only 50-60 pay their dues regularly, and just under 50 actively participate in the General Assemblies. It is necessary to increase the number of active full member countries of the IGU, with a permanent relationship with their EC, particularly among non-European territories. Therefore, any work plan to promote the creation of NCs or proposals for changing the status of some nations toward consideration as Full Members must be encouraged, both by the EC and by organizations that provide ongoing collaboration. On the other hand, the IGU suffers from chronic funding problems, always fragile and sometimes subject to simple political or temporary decisions. Consequently, an external advisory committee that could contribute to the EC's efforts to improve the Union's revenues would constitute a substantial improvement in addressing the IGU's financial insecurities. Finally, the current IGU Presidency is demonstrating the need to undertake permanent Strategic Planning in the Union. With a four-year forecast, coinciding with the President's mandates and between two IGCs, a series of work priorities must be established (greater presence in the ISC, participation in other international scientific organizations, IGU visibility worldwide, promotion of the participation and advancement of women geographers, etc.), and regular consultations with the NCs and Commission Chairs on their implementation. The Strategic Plan is implemented by the President, assisted by the EC members, but an external Advisory Committee could also assess progress and difficulties in its implementation, acting as a permanent external advisor on the plan.

Therefore, the creation of a Special Counselor to the IGU Presidency is proposed. This person would coordinate a four-member Advisory Committee composed of former IGU presidents and vice-presidents. The Advisory Committee will be governed by strict gender parity. Furthermore, its term of office will be limited and will coincide with one or half a term of the Union's Presidency. This Advisory Committee could focus on these three tasks and provide external support for the ongoing work of the Presidency and the EC members. The operation of the Advisory Committee will not entail any additional costs for the IGU Treasury. Serving on its positions will be voluntary and unpaid. Nor should it impose any additional bureaucratic burden on the IGU Executive Committee, as the Advisory Committee will prepare annual reports on its work, which will be submitted to the President and Secretary General. Based on the significance of the report's content, they will decide whether or not to include it on the Executive Committee's meeting agenda.

The creation of these positions would require approval at an EC meeting, consultation with the General Assembly, and a specific amendment to the IGU Statutes.

## Statement on the Establishment of the IGU Advisory Committee

The International Geographical Union (IGU) continues to affirm its significance through increasingly frequent congresses and conferences, greater participation from countries of the Global South, and an active role in the International Science Council (ISC) and other international scientific bodies. Yet, the Union faces persistent challenges that require sustained and coordinated responses.

Foremost among these are:

1. **Organizational Gaps** – Of the 110 countries connected with the IGU, only about half pay dues regularly, and fewer than 50 actively participate in the General Assemblies. Strengthening membership, particularly from non-European territories, is essential to building a more representative and engaged global Union.
2. **Chronic Financial Fragility** – The Union’s revenues remain vulnerable, often affected by temporary or political factors. External support and strategic advice are needed to help stabilize and diversify financial resources.
3. **Strategic Planning** – The IGU must maintain a consistent and long-term vision. A four-year Strategic Plan aligned with the presidential mandate should define priorities such as increasing IGU’s global visibility, strengthening participation in international organizations, and advancing equity, including the active promotion of women geographers.

To address these challenges, the IGU proposes the establishment of a **Special Counselor to the Presidency**, coordinating a four-member **Advisory Committee** composed of former IGU presidents and vice-presidents, with gender parity in its composition. This body would provide external expertise, assess the implementation of the Strategic Plan, and support the Executive Committee (EC) in advancing IGU’s mission. It will not entail additional costs for the IGU, nor new bureaucratic burdens. The creation of these roles requires EC approval, consultation with the General Assembly, and an amendment to the IGU Statutes.

Beyond organizational concerns, the Advisory Committee is also envisioned as a **consultative body** providing strategic guidance, professional expertise, and diverse perspectives. Its role will be to:

- Offer advice on matters of vocational education, industry developments, and labor relations.
- Recommend initiatives that enhance members’ skills, knowledge, and professional development.
- Foster partnerships with universities, employers, governments, and professional organizations to expand opportunities for training, collaboration, and advocacy.

The Advisory Committee will operate in a **non-decision-making capacity**, ensuring that its recommendations are considered in good faith by IGU leadership. Its duration will coincide with that of a term of the IGU Presidency or a two-year term of the same. Through this mechanism, the Union will strengthen its accountability, transparency, and relevance to members, while positioning itself to respond more effectively to global challenges.

In summary, the Advisory Committee will serve as a bridge between the IGU’s leadership and its wider community, helping the Union remain innovative, inclusive, and resilient in the years ahead.