

International Geographical Union
Minutes of the IGU Executive Committee Meeting
Wednesday 10th and Thursday 11th April 2024
School of Geography and Ocean Sciences, Nanjing University, China

1. Welcome

The meeting was chaired by IGU President Michael Meadows (MM) who welcomed Nathalie Lemarchand (NL) as First Vice-President, Past-President Yukio Himiyama, (YH), Secretary-General Barbaros Gönençgil, (BG), Vice-President and Treasurer, Holly Barcus (HB), Vice-Presidents Ruben Lois-González (RL-G), Yazidhi Bamutaze (YB), Phil McManus (PM), Maria Paradiso (MP), Céline Rozenblat (CR) and Fu Bojie (FB) and Assistant Secretary-General Pankaj Kumar (PK). Meadows warmly thanked his colleagues and hosts in the School of Geography and Ocean Sciences, and the Geographical Society of China for their financial and logistical support. MM pointed out that this was an unusual EC meeting in that this was the first in more than four years when it was possible for all members to be present in person. The Executive Committee (EC) meeting commenced at 08h30 local time on both Wednesday 10th and Thursday 11th April 2024.

2. Adoption of the agenda

With the addition of an item on the 'Earth Charter', the agenda was adopted.

3. Minutes of recent IGU EC meetings

Minutes of the online meeting held on 31st January 2024 were tabled and approved for translation into French, following which they will be posted on the website (NL, PK).

4. Organization

4.01 IGU Annual report 2023

This was distributed to the IGU community in late January and will be tabled again, along with the 2022 report at the Dublin General Assembly.

4.02 Financial report and country dues

4.02a EC finance sub-committee report-back

Two meetings of the sub-committee (BG,HB,MM,PM) had taken place with a broad remit to explore two primary areas, viz. the structure of IGU income, and the need to support our strategy through disbursements. Restructuring of the fee collection system had been explored in some detail but there are complexities involved in applying a structure similar to that used by ISC. It was proposed, and agreed, that the sub-committee reconvene and then come back to the EC at the next meeting with a formal proposal regarding membership dues. Any potential increase in the fees, however structured, needs to be very carefully and thoroughly motivated. The issue of the Promotion and Solidarity (P&S) Fund was raised and it was agreed that, in accordance with the Statutes, a proportion of this fund should be used to support travel grants to attend Congresses and Regional Conferences. It was suggested that the future of the P&S fund should also be considered by the finance sub-committee, which is requested to submit a report in time for the EC meeting in Dublin in August. CR noted the need for IGU to be strategically more active within the broader scientific community, including ISC, CIPSH, UN-GGIM, CODATA, IDSSD, and that the additional costs of effective engagement must be taken into account.

4.02b IGU Budget 2024

HB noted the relatively stability of the annual budget but that, given the increased allocation for travel grant awards for the Dublin Congress, additional support for the Olympiad, the annual expenditure for 2024 will likely exceed income, although the accounts overall will maintain a positive balance owing to reserves accrued during the pandemic years. There was discussion regarding the need for a third EC meeting during 2024 and whether or not this should be held in virtual or in-person format, which would be an additional financial cost. A final decision will be made at the Dublin EC meeting.

4.03 EC member annual reports 2023

BG presented a summary of these annual reports. The updated and corrected (all) summary report is to be distributed with the agenda documents at the Dublin General Assembly.

4.04 IGU EC meeting schedule 2024

BG tabled the draft schedule for the Dublin EC meeting, noting arrivals on 22nd August 2024, EC meeting on 23rd and 25th August in time for the opening ceremony on 24th August. The schedule and venues for a third meeting in 2024 and 2025 meetings will be finalized at the Dublin EC meeting.

Operations

5.01 IGU Elections nominations

BG reported on the nominations received for IGU President and Vice-Presidents following the call issued in January. BG briefly presented the candidate nomination documents as follows, all of whom have been nominated by their respective IGU National Committees:

Nominated for IGU President:

Professor Nathalie Lemarchand (France)

Nominated for IGU Vice-President (four vacancies):

Professor Jonas Åkerman (Sweden)

Professor Adrian Bailey (United Kingdom)

Professor Yazidhi Bamutaze (Uganda)

Professor Holly Barcus (United States)

Professor Anindita Datta (India)

Professor Bernardo Mançano Fernandes (Brazil)

Professor Celine Rozenblat (Switzerland)

Professor Takashi Yamazaki (Japan)

Professor Marek Wieckowski (Poland)

BG agreed to distribute the candidate nominations to the wider IGU community within the coming days. It was agreed that indications of support will only be distributed with this communication if sent by the chair of the national committee.

5.01a List of IGU member countries deemed to be in 'good standing'

In view of the upcoming elections at the Dublin General Assembly, BG and HB compiled the current list of member countries who have consistently paid their annual dues during the period 2020-23. The list is to be distributed to all IGU National Committees chairs, along with the candidate nominations within the next ten days (BG) and will be updated again immediately prior to the Dublin General Assembly.

5.02 IGU General Assembly 2024 agenda and schedule

BG tabled the draft agenda for the Dublin General Assembly. Several items were added, including the appointment of two tellers and three members for the finance committee. The General Assembly agenda is to be distributed shortly to the IGU community following a final check (BG, MM). The Dublin General Assembly is scheduled for three two-hour sessions on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday 26th to 28th August 2024.

5.03 IGU Commissions and Task Forces

5.03a Geography Olympiad and iGEO proposal

BG noted that a formal request from the Olympiad Task force to be established as a Commission has been received. The EC has already approved this, and the recommendation will be presented at the Dublin General Assembly. A similar recommendation has been conveyed to the Young and Early Career Geographers Task Force although, as yet, this has not elicited a formal response (BG).

5.03b C&TF activity reports and recommendations for continuation

The EC discussed the activities of each Commission and Task Force based on the annual reports of the last three years. Annual reports all Commissions and Task Forces form the basis of the EC recommendation to the Dublin General Assembly regarding continuation for the next inter-congress period (2024-28). Several Commissions have failed to submit regular annual reports on their activities and MM agreed to draft letters for forwarding by BG to the relevant chairpersons indicating that a discontinuation recommendation is in the offing. There was also an extensive discussion about the need to promote younger and early career members of steering committees and how to facilitate this.

5.03c IGU Commission Excellence Award 2023

NL, who chairs the IGU Commission Excellence Award committee noted that 38 Commissions were considered for the 2023 award. The recommendation of the committee is that the IGU Commissions on Land Use and Land Cover Change and Local and Regional Development be jointly awarded the IGU Commission Excellence Award for 2023.

5.04 IGU Ethics Guidelines

Following agreement at the last meeting that the IGU should publish on the website a statement relating to ethics in geographical research, teaching and outreach activities. The subcommittee (NL, MP, MM) tabled an initial working document. Discussion ensued as to the nature of such a statement, and whether or not it should include a set of 'guidelines'. It is clear that the IGU can be guided by the International Science Council in regard to broader principles of academic freedom and responsibility and that IGU has already committed to the International Charter for Geographical Education, and this can be referred to in the final document. The situation regarding Artificial Intelligence (AI) represents an important additional element that needs to be accounted for, and it was agreed that PK should join the subcommittee, which will convene again as necessary before the Dublin Congress with the aim of drafting a version for discussion at the EC meeting and adoption by the General Assembly.

5.05 IGU National Committee contact details

BG noted the need to update and strictly maintain the list of IGU National Committee members. All EC members were requested to carefully check contact details in the case of their personal liaison responsibilities.

5.06 IGU website

5.06a Website bandwidth. PK reported that from time to time, especially towards the end of the month, the IGU website bandwidth limitations result in the site crashing and that additional bandwidth is needed. The supplementary cost is modest, and the request was approved. There was a brief discussion about translation to French and Spanish and the availability of an automated system that would facilitate this. PK and CR agreed to explore this possibility.

5.06b Commission and Task Force websites. PK tabled an evaluation of C&TF websites and reported that only 30 of 43 commissions in total have websites that are functioning adequately and there are several commissions that have no website at all. PK agreed to follow-up with the chairs as appropriate.

5.07 IGU Honors and Awards Committee (H&AC)

YH reported on the outcome of the deliberations of the H&AC and tabled the report. The recommendations were accepted. MM will write to congratulate the winners and the committee chair, at the request of YH, will write to the nominators of those who were unsuccessful. These awards will be conferred at the Dublin Congress. The Committee commented on the remarkable, and regrettable, lack of females among the nominations and challenges the IGU to attempt to redress this matter in future. The Committee also raised the issue of imbalance in the geographical origin of nominations and admitted that possible strategies to address may be difficult to develop. It was agreed to ask the committee to include additional sentences in the guidelines and call as appropriate that address both challenges and that MM will provide an initial draft. YH agreed to reply in detail to the chair of the committee regarding a range of other issues raised. It was noted that several new members will be required to join the Committee and that EC members should carefully consider and suggest possible nominees. The current chair has kindly agreed to remain for the next two-year cycle. MM will include the

awards in the President's report at the Dublin General Assembly, acknowledging the hard work of members of this committee. The Committee's report is attached as Appendix I.

5.08 IGU Bulletin

Volume 69-70, covering the years 2019-2020, is now posted on the website and a limited number of copies (six) has been printed and these will be brought to Dublin and presented to the archivist. Volume 71-72, covering the years 2021-2022, is now under construction (BG).

5.09 IGU e-newsletter

CR reported briefly that the next issue is scheduled for publication in May 2024. This is distributed directly to approximately 10,000 geographers globally, and noted that the number of 'clicks' appears to be increasing.

IGU Conferences and Congresses

6.01 IGU Thematic Conference, 15-17 May 2024, Quito, Ecuador

RLG reported that there are more than 150 registrations for this thematic conference, with strong representation from Latin American countries, and participation also from India, several African countries, and New Zealand. The definitive final programme is expected to be available online shortly. RLG, HB and NL are all attending as representatives of the EC.

6.02 International Geographical Congress, Dublin 2024

The local organizing committee (LOC) has submitted a comprehensive progress report on the Congress. More than 3400 abstracts have been submitted and the provisional programme is available on the Congress website. Arrangements for the Olympiad are now on track, although it was noted that the registration fee is higher than expected and that this may limit participation. As a general point, NL proposed that local conference organizers consider providing for one-day registration at future Congresses and Conference. BG and MM undertook to draft an appropriate amendment to the Congress and Conference MOU reflecting this. BG is in regular contact with the LOC.

6.02a IGU Travel grants

PM reported that, together with YB and HB, the IGU travel grant application and selection process has been successfully concluded, and the US\$30,000 has been allocated. The allocated amount is less than \$30,000 as some few awardees declined. A substantial number (336) of applications was received, with approximately one in seven of these funded. Liaison with the Dublin LOC's travel bursary scheme had proved very helpful. The process is complex and a number of recommendations were noted for future conferences.

6.03 IGU Thematic Conference, 2025, Cairo, Egypt, 12th to 15th April 2025

BG reported that the MOA with the Cairo LOC has been signed. Eleven IGU Commissions have now agreed to support the conference. A venue has been finalized, a website is under construction and registration and call for abstracts will be open at dates to be confirmed. BG agreed to prompt the LOC to finalize the appropriate dates and also to prepare documentation in English, French, and Arabic. Gender balance in relation to all conference activities, including keynotes etc., is strongly encouraged.

6.04 IGU Regional Conference 2026 Istanbul, Turkey, 17th to 21st August 2026.

BG provided a brief update on this conference, indicating timelines. The first announcement will be made at the Dublin Congress, and the first circular distributed in September 2024.

6.05 International Geographical Congress, Melbourne 9th to 14th July 2028

PM reported that key members of the LOC will be present at the Dublin Congress and that there is evident progress on several fronts regarding the organization. The MOU draft would be finalised ready for signing with the help of the Conference Organiser once this organisation had been appointed, which was based on the advice of the Dublin LOC. It was noted that the IGU website needs to be updated to reflect the finalised dates (PK).

6.06 Future IGU Congresses and Regional Conferences

RL-G briefly presented the proposal submitted by the IGU Spain National Committee that the 2032 Congress be held in late August 2032 in Madrid and Santiago de Compostela with the theme: 'Geography without borders. Uniting territories and centralising knowledge'. This is supported by the EC and the recommendation will be presented to the General Assembly in Dublin. No proposals have been received for the 2030 IGU Regional Conference and the call will be re-opened (BG)

Cooperation and Outreach

7.01 International Science Council

7.01a Revision of the ISC Statutes and Rules of Procedure

Following an extensive consultative process and Extraordinary General Assembly, the revised ISC Statutes and Rules of Procedure have now been approved.

7.01b ISC General Assembly 2025

This will take place in Muscat, Oman, 26th to 30th January 2025. NL and MM will attend to represent IGU.

7.01c ISC Nominations and Elections Committee

ISC has called for nominations to this important committee. IGU has been approached to support the candidacy of another Union but it was agreed to nominate NL to this committee (BG, MM).

7.01d Nomination for the Stein Rokkan Prize. MP identified a suitable candidate and agreed to submit a nomination.

7.01e ISC GeoUnions, IYBSSD Webinar

MM chaired a recent meeting of the ISC GeoUnions. The main development was an agreement to continue the IYBSSD Webinar series now in the context of the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development (IDSSD). URSI has agreed to manage the process and the first webinar is expected to be arranged for a date in May. MM has agreed to participate in an online meeting to arrange this, along with other members of the webinar subcommittee (which includes YH).

7.01f Earth-Humanity Coalition

MM presented the documentation regarding the founding of the Earth-Humanity Coalition and it was agreed that it is important for IGU to support the initiative and pay an initial contribution of EUR1000 as a member organization. The inaugural General Assembly will take place online on 16th April to be attended by several EC members.

7.01g ISC Regional Focal Point for Asia and the Pacific (RFP-AP)

YH reported on his participation in the Advisory Council of this focal point highlighting its recent online meeting and news mail as well as his one-to-one online meeting with its director, and emphasized the importance of the availability and quality of data, with particular reference to WDS and CODATA.

7.01h Committee for Gender Equality in Science.

NL reported that there are now 24 Unions with representatives on this committee and it continues to be active through several working groups.

7.01i ISC-DRR Committee

A closer relationship with the UN's Integrated Research on Disaster Risk (IRDR) has been formalised through the signing of an MOU with this committee which has wide representation from among the GeoUnions. Under the guidance of its chair, Orhan Altan, there are regular meetings with a focus on coordination of activities among the members.

7.02 UN-GGIM session Geospatial Societies

CR as chair of this group highlighted the structure of this body, which has 11 working groups, five regional committees and three centres. IGU is one of 11 Geospatial Societies, several of which are ISC members. IGU has an important coordinating role in this organization through distributing news of its activities. CR noted the

importance of the IGU community becoming acquainted with the work of UN-GGIM and identify working groups in which we can participate and she will make a presentation at the Dublin General Assembly.

7.03 CODATA-IDPC data policy

PK reported on activities of the committee and tabled a report. A total of 11 working groups have been established and PK is a member of two of these viz. Ethics in data and AI Policies, Data Strategies for Disasters, Pandemics and Geopolitical Conflicts. The issue of coordination with UN-GGIM was raised, indeed CODATA now forms part of UN-GGIM. PK accepted the invitation to join the IGU ethics guidelines sub-committee.

7.04 CIPSH

In recognition of the 75th anniversary of CIPSH, Professor Zoltan Somhegyi, nominated by CIPSH, has been invited to present an address at the closing ceremony of the Dublin Congress. This will provide an opportunity for the activities of CIPSH to be highlighted to the IGU community.

7.05 FIG

The 2025 dates are not yet announced. The theme for 2024 is 'territories', and the region 'Alps'. There is a new agreement with FIG whereby the local organizers will host an IGU representative at St Die, although travel costs to Paris must be met by IGU. NL agreed to identify a suitable representative to participate.

7.06 Other events

7.06a Geonight 2024

The initiative continues to grow from strength to strength. More than 280 events have been proposed to be presented over two days (5th and 12th April 2024). Events are available online after the actual Geonight dates. The traditional online toast to launch the annual event had been attended by MM and NL.

7.06b AIGF

NL reported that the organization is now well established and has developed a number of thematic commissions. The next Congress will be held in 2025.

7.06c International GORILLA Conference, Kampala 2024

YB reported that the Third International Conference on Geographical Science for Resilient Communities, Ecosystems and Livelihoods under Global Environmental Change (GORILLA) is planned for 4th to 6th December 2024 in Kampala. The website is now established and planning is underway. YB invited all EC members to attend; MM indicated that he plans to do so.

7.06e AAG

HB reported that there is no formal EC representation in Honolulu (the IGU did not have an information booth at the meeting) but that IGU is co-sponsoring a small promotional social event with the Dublin LOC.

7.06f Edward Elgar Series

HB and Iain Hay have recently sent out a call for additional contributions and HB encouraged EC members to share this with appropriate colleagues and asked for further ideas on how to expand and promote the series.

7.06g EGAL

The next conference is scheduled to be hosted by the University of Mexico in 2025.

7.07g Vautrin Lud prize

EC members are encouraged to nominate possible names.

8. Other Business

8.1. Opinions on General Strategic Positioning of IGU

NL, as *de facto* President elect, shared some of the ideas that are included in her nomination documents and asked those present for any comments. NL was congratulated for her nomination and the EC looks forward to working together to further promote the IGU mission in the coming four years.

9. Adjourn

Meadows thanked all for their attendance and positive contribution. He expressed his warm appreciation to

Nanjing University School of Geography and Ocean Science, the Geographical Society of China, and East China Normal University for financial and logistical support. He thanked in particular Professor Lu Huayu, Dean of the School of Geography and Ocean Science and his team of administrative staff and students for the excellent meeting arrangements and hospitality, and especially in providing the opportunity to interact with the NJU community of geographers. The meeting adjourned at 16h00 on 11th April 2024.