



Overview IYGU key activities 2011-2014

Document in
preparation of the
editors' meeting
June 3-4, 2014 in
Jena

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2011

March

March 4-5, Weimar: inaugural meeting of the IYGU Steering Committee

Results of the meeting: The meeting established the IYGU's transdisciplinary nature: it explored ways of addressing the social sciences and the humanities' shortcomings in dealing with global change issues, as well as the need for natural scientists to understand that global climate change requires global social change.

May

May 12-14, Jena: meeting of the Steering Committee, the Scientific Committee and the Outreach Committee

Results of the meeting:

- 'Eating'/'Drinking'/'Surviving': Walter Spiess, Peter Jackson; Farhana Sultana; hydrologist and soil scientist to be determined
- 'Moving'/'Staying'/'Belonging': Mathis Stock, John Urry, John Beaverstock
- 'Working'/'Housing'/'Urbanizing': Allen Scott, Saskia Sassen, Peter Taylor, John Beaverstock, Jacques Levy
- 'Communicating'/'Networking'/'Interacting: Margaret Robertson, Karl Donert, Eric Tsang,
- Outreach: Margaret Robertson, Karl Donert, Eric Tsang, Rupert Maclean

The meeting developed the guidelines for the description of these key topics. Three axes should be taken in consideration:

1. Local actions and their global consequences;
2. Identification of the integration of socio-cultural and bio-physical aspects mentioned in the Grand Challenges;
3. Sustainable vs. unsustainable forms of everyday action.

2012

May

24 April – 4 May, Taipei, TAIWAN: Meeting with Prof. Lee (Taiwan): In early May I met ICSU President Prof Lee in Taiwan (a) to discuss the possibilities for linking the IYGU initiative with the Future Earth program and (b) to prepare the IYGU presentation at the Rio+20 conference in June in Rio de Janeiro.

June

June 8-10, Jena, GERMANY: TIERS conference: The ICSU-funded project "Transdisciplinary Interdisciplinary Ecological Research on Sustainability" (TIERS) featured renowned and young academics in the field of sustainability research hailing from all five continents as well as regional-level policymakers from Germany. The presentations of the 29 speakers were followed by lively discussions in the formal setting of the conference venue as well as in the more informal environment of the conference's social events. The proceedings will be published by Springer in

2014. The general report to ICSU has been accepted by the evaluation committee at the end of September 2012.

June 20-22, Rio de Janeiro, BRAZIL: Rio+20 conference: The IYGU was well-represented with big success by Luiz Oosterbeek, Gordon McBean, Ed de Mulder, and Ingelore Scheunemann.

August

August 26-30, Cologne, GERMANY: The 32nd International Geographical Congress (IGC) saw geographers from around the world gather in Cologne, Germany¹. I presented the IYGU in a Special Session titled 'The IGU-initiative for an International Year of Global Understanding (IYGU)' on August 27, 2012. The session was chaired by Ron Abler and included further IYGU-related contributions from Bruno Messerli, John Pickles and Vladimir Kolossov.

November

November 8-24: BRAZIL: I went to Brazil to follow up on the contacts to the Brazilian Ministry of External Relations as well as to meet industry representatives, seeking their support for our application. I gave four presentations during my stay in Brazil: Two presentations at the University of São Paulo; one presentation at a geographers' meeting in Presidente Prudente (the 2nd International Seminar on Micro-territories in Cities); and one presentation to the Confederação Nacional da Indústria² (CNI) in Brasília at their 82^a Reunião do Conselho Temático de Meio Ambiente (COEMA) (the 82nd meeting of CNI's Council for the Environment).

The several meetings in Brasilia yielded successful outcomes: Support for the political process was obtained from the Ministry of External Relations, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI) and the Confederação Nacional da Indústria (CNI), the national industry confederation. Political support by the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB) and the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) hinges on the Brazilian Government backing the IYGU initiative. Ambassador Maria Laura Rocha, head of the Brazilian UNESCO delegation, will make the final decision about Brazil's position in the political application process.

December

December 10: Formal support by ICSU: letter of endorsement dated 10 December 2012

December 14-21, Kigali, RWANDA: Ed de Mulder (IYGU Advisory Board) and I went to Kigali to meet government officials. The trip concluded with the IYGU being made a so-called 'official dossier' of the Rwandan Government. The Rwandan Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Hon. Mrs. Louise Mushikiwabo, signaled great interest in taking the lead in the political process and introducing our application to declare 2016 the UN International Year of Global Understanding to the UNESCO/UN. Given that Rwanda has recently been elected a member of the UN Security Council, the Rwandan Ministry of Foreign Affairs is very optimistic about garnering support for our initiative from a larger number of UN Member States. Of course, this would have only become relevant if the Rwandan Cabinet agreed to take the lead in this process, which it did in March 2013 (see below).

¹ For the IGC website see <http://igc2012.org/frontend/index.php>

² Website in English:

http://www.cni.org.br/portal/main.jsp?lumPageId=4028808115EC919A0115FD22C59D0AFB&lumA=1&lumII=4028808115EC919A01161F0A9C1E4E94&locale=en_US&doui_processActionId=setLocaleProcessAction

2013

March

The Rwandan government takes the decision by executive order to bring the IYGU to the UN General Assembly by asking first of all, for the support of the UNESCO Executive Board and General Conference.

April

The IYGU is tabled for the executive board September/October in Paris.

May

- Quebec: ACFAS meeting
- Beijing: Regional Action Center contract signed; Meeting with member of the Chinese Academy of Science, former vice-minister of science and technology
- Taipei: Minister of Environment; Sustainable Taiwan 2050: The IYGU will make a contribution to achieving the goals of 'Sustainable Taiwan 2050'. This will be done by integrating the IYGU idea into the national Taiwanese secondary school curriculum for geography.

August

- Kyoto IGU Regional conference: Keynote & report to the Executive Committee of the International Geographical Union
- Regional Center in Japan; meeting with the President of the Science Council of Japan Prof. Takashi Onishi

October

The Executive Board of UNESCO has adopted the resolution of the IGU initiative for an IYGU presented by the group of the East African countries in the name of Rwanda unanimously without debate.

November

November 19: Paris, FRANCE: The 37th UNESCO General Conference decided unanimously to support the Rwandan submission for the Proclamation of 2016 as International Year of Global Understanding to the UN General Assembly. This is the real breakthrough, just one more step lies ahead and then we will have achieved what we are planning systematically for more than four years by now.

2014

January

January 27-28: Berlin, GERMANY: German Future Earth Summit (<http://2014.dkn-future-earth.org/home>). The contact with the national committee of Future Earth has been established at the constitutive conference in late January 2014 in Berlin.

January 30-31: Berlin, GERMANY: The inaugural meeting of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Secretary-General of the United Nations was hosted by the UNESCO in Berlin (<http://www.sab-2014-berlin.de/en/inaugural-meeting/outcome/>). I attended the official opening ceremony on January 30, 10am – 12noon.

April

April 1-11: Tomar, PORTUGAL: DECLARATION OF MAÇÃO ON INTEGRATED CULTURAL LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT FOR LOCAL AND GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY: Submission of a Erasmus Program on Global understanding und Global Sustainability. Titel: Apheleia – Integrated Cultural Landscape Management for Local and global sustainability, Submitting Universities: Universities of Tomar, Jena and Vilnius and 16 partner Organizations/Institutions from 12 different European Countries

April 19-25: New York, USA: UN, Rwanda's Permanent Mission; presenting the IYGU and working to get it onto the agenda for the 69th session of the UN General Assembly starting in Sept 2014: We are preparing for the submission of the UNESCO resolution to the UN in the remaining days of April 2014. This should ensure that the resolution makes it onto the agenda of the next UN General Assembly session starting in September 2014. For this reason I spent April 19-25, 2014 in New York where I met with delegates of Rwanda's Permanent Mission to the UN and attended the Interactive Dialogue on Harmony with Nature³ on April 22.

Together with Inguelore Scheunemann, Luiz Oosterbeek, Sybelle de Jongh, Adama Samassekou, Youkio Himiyama, Shanghyi Zhou, etc. we contacted more than 50 member states of the UN

July

Brasilia, Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, BRAZIL: Meeting with the president of the Brazilian Chamber of Commerce Mr. Robson Andrade (together with Inguelore Scheunemann and Eliezer Batista) and representatives of science funding agencies.

July/August

Zurich, SWITZERLAND: Meeting with the Director of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)

August

Kraków, POLAND: Keynote, Report to the Executive Committee of the International Geographical Union; presentation to geography teachers; discussion of the IYGU in the context of the GeoOlympiad (Kathryn Berg and Lex Chalmers)

September

Kigali, RWANDA: Meeting with the foreign minister of Rwanda in Kigali (Louise Mushikiwabo): Finalizing the IYGU Action Plan with priority given to African countries

³ General information on the UN's Harmony with Nature Interactive Dialogue can be found here: <http://www.harmonywithnatureun.org/> The concept note and the preliminary program can be found here: http://www.un.org/en/ga/president/68/events/harmony_and_nature.shtml