

IYGU Report January 2103

Jena, January 4, 2013

First of all, the most important news: We are just one step away from starting the application process at UNESCO. The recent trip to Kigali, Rwanda, from 14-21 December 2012 concluded with the IYGU made an official dossier of the Rwandan Government. The formal decision on whether Rwanda is going to serve as the applicant country will be made at the meeting of the Rwandan Cabinet on January 15, 2013. 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 at the UNESCO Executive Board meeting in Paris in April 2013, at the UNESCO General Conference in September 2013, and finally at the UN General Assembly in New York in December 2013. 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 from a larger number of countries; of course, this only becomes relevant if case the Rwandan cabinet approves the application to take the lead in this process.

The **second** piece of good news is that Brazil indicated its willingness to support the IYGU politically, as well as financially. During my visit to Brazil from 8-24 November, I presented the IYGU at the University of São Paulo and to the Confederação Nacional da Indústria (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). This was an important step in obtaining support from Brazil.

The **third** good news is the ICSU's formal support, which was received in a letter of endorsement dated December 10, 2012 (see second attachment). This enhances the basis for entering into talks with UNESCO/the UN and for gaining support from outside academia. With the ICSU, ISSC, and CIPSH's support, the three most important global science umbrella organizations now officially support the IYGU initiative. In this context, it is also important to note that the ICSU's president-elect, Prof. Gordon McBean, has introduced the IYGU initiative to the 'Future Earth' initiative.

The following paragraphs summarize the most important steps taken (since my last report) to make this new, very promising situation possible.

IYGU and the UNESCO/UN

In early May, I met the ICSU President Prof. Lee in Taiwan (a) to discuss the possibilities of linking the IYGU initiative with the Future Earth program and (b) to prepare the IYGU presentation at the Rio+20 conference in Rio de Janeiro in June. Prof. Lee was also instrumental in furthering the political process of the IYGU initiative in preparation for its progress through the UN system. He suggested contacting Gretchen Kalonji (Assistant Director General for Natural Sciences in UNESCO). Her Executive Assistant, Pascale Murugaiyan, advised that there were two possible ways to proceed through the UN system with our application for an International Year of Global Understanding in 2016.

According to them, there are two possible ways of obtaining UNESCO's support. The **first option** would be to approach the UN directly and gain UNESCO's endorsement later. In this case, a direct application to the UN should be submitted by one of its Member States and should also be supported by about 20 other UN Member States. This plan was pursued until the end of June 2012, but was abandoned due to my illness. The **second option** for gaining UNESCO's support involves finding an applicant country (which must be a UNESCO Member State) by the end of January 2013; this country would then submit the proposal for consideration by the UNESCO Executive Board. Should our application be approved at the May/June meeting of this Board, it would be submitted to the UNESCO General Conference in September/October 2013. Should this General Conference also decide in favor of our application, it would then proceed to the UN General Assembly, which will meet in November/December 2013. We are currently pursuing this second pathway and are aiming for an IYGU in 2016 (instead of 2014 which had been the original plan).

Ms Murugaiyan put me in touch with her colleague Mr. Maciej Nalecz, Director of the Division of Basic and Engineering Sciences, Natural Sciences Sector, and presently working with the European Physical Society on the International Year of Light planned for 2015. Mr. Nalecz provided more precise information on International

Years and put me in touch with Ms. Lidia Brito, Director of the Division for Science Policy and Capacity Building, who is also the UNESCO focal point for the ICSU. The IYGU Steering Committee members Heide Hackmann and Gordon McBean both know Ms. Brito personally and indicated that I further consult with her.

Political Application Process: UNESCO/UN

The following sections provide a brief overview of the contacts that have been established in the quest for an applicant country before the recent talks with Rwanda took the reported positive turn. Contact was - as indicated in my previous report - first made with the **Korean** permanent mission at the UN in New York in February 2012; Mr. Won Yang was the contact person. According to Prof. Lee, we would find a strong supporter in Prof Dong-Pil Min, the Science and Technology Ambassador of Korea. Prof. Lee also informed me that Dr. Han Seung-Soo, former Prime Minister of Korea and currently the head of the Global Green Growth Institute, as well as a member of the UN Secretary General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability, would certainly support the IYGU initiative on its way through the UN system. I hope to receive a reply from the Korean representatives soon.

Brazil is prepared to support another country's application to the UN, but will not take the lead in the application process. Contact has been established through Ingelore Scheunemann with the Minister of External Relations, Mr. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota. Members of the IYGU Steering Committee (Gordon McBean, Ed de Mulder, Adama Samassékou) and Scientific Panel (Luiz Oosterbeek) presented the initiative at the Rio+20 conference in July 2012. I was able to strengthen these ties at the abovementioned presentation of the IYGU initiative to Brazil's national industry association (CNI) at its "82ª Reunião do Coema Nacional" in Brasília on November 20, 2012. As indicated above, my travels to Brazil – perfectly well coordinated by Sybelle de Jong – 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 the Ibero-American States for Education, Science, and Culture (OEI); and the Confederação Nacional da Indústria (CNI). The final decision about Brazil's position in the political application process will be made by Ambassador Maria Laura Rocha, head of the Brazilian UNESCO dele-

gation. Ambassador Guilherme Patriota, key advisor of for international relations to the Brazilian president, Dilma Roussef, assured his support in this respect. Further political support would be possible by the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB) and the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO). If we get a positive decision by the Cabinet of the Rwandan Government, I will get in touch with Ambassador Maria Laura Rocha in Paris. Support for cooperation regarding a scientific research agenda in the framework of the IYGU (transdisciplinary research) was offered by the Ministry of Science and Technology in a meeting with the Ambassador Carmen Ribeiro Moura (Head of International Department) and Dr. Ademar Seabra da Cruz (Science and Technology Division of the Ministry of Foreign Relations); support for educational programs was offered by the OIE's (Organization of Ibero-American States) cultural affairs section at a meeting with its director Dr. Ivana de Siqueira. She also made clear that the Brazilian section of the OEI will try to obtain support from the other partner countries.

In addition, there is the prospect of the CNI helping to tap potential funding sources within Brazil and/or becoming a donor itself. An appeal for financial support has been submitted to CNI but confirmation is still pending. After the COEMA/CNI meeting, CNI's Executive Manager of Environment and Sustainability, Mr. Shelley de Souza Carneiro, invited me to present the IYGU at the Brazilian sustainability summit in Manaus in the first half of 2013. In return, I asked whether CNI could support the IYGU in political and financial respects, especially with regard to support for Rwanda should it decide lead the political application process. He assured his support in these matters and was also prepared to ask the Ministry of External Relations for support for the political application process at UNESCO.

Other formal, but non-committal, contacts have been established with **Morocco** (Mr. Mustapha Baba, the deputy environment minister, Mr. Nouredine Bencheikh and the Mohammed VI Foundation), **Austria** (Prof. Kloesterle, Minister for Science and Education), **Burkina Faso** (Minister Prof. Dr. Jean Koulidati, Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development), **Botswana** (Minister Kitso Mokaila, Ministry of the Environment, Wildlife, and Tourism), and **Luxembourg** (national UNESCO delegation). **Slovenia**, which is a member of the Green Group countries (the others are

Costa Rica, Cape Verde, Iceland, Singapore, and the United Arab Emirates), showed serious interest in taking the lead and was willing to introduce the IYGU to the other group members.

Contact with the Rwandan authorities were established through Edith Mukakayumba (President of la Maison de la Géographie in Montreal, Scientific Panel of the IYGU). Soon after the first preliminary talks that she and I had about **Rwanda** being a possible applicant country at the IGC in Cologne in August 2013, Edith Mukakayumba established contact with the Rwandan Foreign Minister at a end-September meeting in Boston, later with Mr. Robert Masozera (Ambassador of Rwanda in Belgium/Head of the Rwandan Mission in the European Union) and Mr. Jacques Kabalé (Ambassador of Rwanda in France/Head of the Rwandan Delegation at the UNESCO), making possible her exploratory visit to Rwanda. During her visit in Rwanda from October 30 to November 17 Edith was able to meet Hon Mrs Louise Mushikiwabo (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation), Mr Stanislas Kamanzi (Minister of Natural Resources), and Sylvie Zaïnabo Kayitesi (Deputy Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Rwanda/Vice Chair of the African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights). The successful networking by Edith Mukakayumba resulted in an invitation of Eduardo de Mulder and me to Kigali and the opportunity to present IYGU to several government representatives in the week before Christmas. During these days the initiative was presented to Hon Mrs Jeanne d'Arc Mujawamariya (Rector of the Technical University of Kigali), Hon Mrs Louise Mushikiwabo (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation), and Mrs Edda Mukabagwiza, Christine Nkulikiyinka (Ambassador of Rwanda to Germany), Mr Robert Masozera, Mr Jacques Kabalé, Prof Silas Lwakabamba (Rector of the National University of Rwanda), Prof. Manasse Mbonye (Vice-Rector of the NUR) and other official representatives of the Rwandan Government. Because of the fantastic arrangements and networking of Sylvie Zaïnabo Kayitesi, and Edith Mukakayumba these decisive meetings could be arranged at short notice and within a tight time frame. All Ministers, Ambassadors and other representatives expressed their approval of IYGU throughout the meetings and seemed to be willing to proceed with the application process. Nonetheless, the formal process requires that the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs submit a motion at the next Cabinet meeting on January 15, 2013. Even though the Cabinet makes the final decision, it seems the IYGU could find sufficient support within the Government to be approved by the Cabinet.

Before leaving for Rwanda, the evaluation of the status of support by other countries in the political application process showed clearly that Luxembourg and Slovenia were not in a situation to take the lead, but will support the initiative within the UNESCO/UN process. Slovenia might do the networking to bring the other members of the Green Group on board for supporting the initiative in its course through UNESCO/UN. The meeting of a group of geographers with the Austrian Minister for Education in Vienna on December 17 yielded the same result.

All in all, we also have informally expressed support from **Germany, Monaco, Austria, Slovenia, Luxembourg, Korea, and Brazil**; the latter might bring the whole group of 22 Ibero-American States on board for the UNESCO Executive Board's decision process. The contacts with Botswana, **Mali, Peru, Morocco, and Burkina Faso** will be reactivated as soon as the application process at UNESCO starts. In sum, this would include more than 20 countries (out of 58) that belong to various electoral groups of the UNESCO Executive Board. This makes it increasingly likely that our application will take a successful first step at this Board's meeting in April 2013 given the Rwandan Government's positive support.

Continental Centers

The set-up of the Continental Centers is making steady progress. The University of **Mexico City** (Prof. Irasema Alcatar) agreed to host the Center for America, the University of **Hamilton** (Prof. Dr. Robyn Longhurst) that for Oceania, and the University of **Berne** (Prof. Doris Wastl-Walter) that for Europe. Recently, the president of the Tunisian Association of Geographers, Prof. Dr. Habib Ben Boubaker, offered his support to establish the IYGU Continental Center for Africa or North Africa and the Arabic world in **Tunis**. I suggested that Habib Ben Boubaker should reintegrate the Arab League Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) (whose head office is in Tunis) into the IYGU initiative. Prof. Boubaker's response was very

positive and the negotiations with ALECSO were reportedly very productive. The result is that I will soon receive an invitation to present the IYGU to the local authorities and ALECSO representatives in Tunis. In early December, Shangyi Zhou was able to establish contact with the president of the Chinese Association of Geographers and the Ministry for Science and Education regarding the build up of a Continental Center for East Asia in **Beijing**. I will present the IYGU and the details of such a Center in Beijing in early March. If Rwanda becomes the applicant country, **Kigali** will of course be made the host of the Continental Center for Africa; the Rwandan Foreign Minister and the rector of the National University of Rwanda expressed their great interest in this. Two additional Centers in Montreal (Maison de la Géographie) and in Brasilia (CNI/OIE) might also be possible.

Dissemination

The basic brochure presenting the key aims and objectives of the IYGU is now available in all the official UN languages, except Arabic. The brochure can be downloaded from the newly designed IYGU website. This website also hosts an internet platform for interactive communication, particularly for exchanging and discussing teaching materials.

Editorial teams for most of the six planned theme brochures/booklets on basic everyday actions (eating/drinking//surviving, etc.) have been set up and will begin working as soon as the political application process starts. Negotiations have started with publishers (Sage, Springer).

I was also able to keep up the dissemination efforts concerning print and online media that supplement the presentations that I have been and will be giving. The main items are:

(a) six contributions (Adama Samassékou, Armin Reller, Benno Werlen, Ed de Mulder, Gordon McBean and Matthias Machnig, Minister for Labor and Economy of the German Federal State of Thuringia) by the IYGU network to the Rio+20 publication 'A New paradigm for Sustainability' edited by Ingelore Scheunemann and Luiz Oosterbeek;

(b) the ISSC's World Social Science Report 2013: Invited by Heide Hackmann, the IYGU initiative features prominently in the IGU contribution;

(c) publication in issue 16 of the Public Service Review: European Science and Technology (p.152–153/<http://edition.pagesuite-professional.co.uk/Launch.aspx?EID=a0f13986-9dd2-4713-9cb9-0ab729d026b9>);

(d) an invitation to write two pages of editorial in each edition of Public Service Review: European Science and Technology in 2013 (distributed quarterly);

(e) the IYGU banner with a hyperlink on the Natural Sciences page www.scienceomega.com (<http://www.scienceomega.com/discipline/natural-sciences>) to run from November 2012 until December 2013.

In August, I held two presentations on the IYGU initiative at the **International Geographical Congress (IGC)** in Cologne, Germany, which ran from 26-30 August. One of these presentations was to a general audience, the other to the General Assembly of the congress (the last of the nine sessions). Through the first presentation the already mentioned contacts could be established with Austria, Canada, France, Rwanda, The Netherlands, Turkey, and Tunisia. In a specific session chaired by then IGU president Ron Abler, I presented the program of the whole project and the revamped IYGU website on which the brochure can be downloaded. In the same session, Bruno Messerli emphasized the implication of UN International Years for science policy in his presentation; John Pickles elaborated on the philosophical background of the IYGU, and Vladimir Kolossov, the current IGU president, shared his thoughts on the significance of the IYGU for the IGU. The folder that was handed out to all the congress participants included the IYGU flyer and a specifically designed 'postcard' presenting the key points. The IYGU featured prominently in the congress booklet/ program, and Bruno Messerli and Ed de Mulder emphasized the importance of the IYGU for the enhancement of integrative transdisciplinary research in their keynote addresses.

More presentations of the IYGU are planned; these include to Chinese officials in Beijing in March 2013, at the ACFAS meeting in Montreal (the largest and most important meeting of francophone scientist), at a specific IYGU session co-organized by Edith Mukakayumba, Jules Lamarre and me. Among others, Margret Robertson, Luiz Oosterbeek, Allan Scott, Mathis Stock, will present at this session in May 2013. In addition, the IYGU will be presented at the Taiwan Geosciences

Assembly in Taipei in May 2013, and, we hope, soon to the UNESCO delegations in Paris, and to more than 100 Permanent Missions of the UN in New York.

The revamped website now features a space for uploading publications (<http://www.global-understanding.de/get-involved/publications/>) and an interactive blog/discussion forum where people can post entries and comments on entries made by others. Currently, the website is only available in English; however, technical provisions have been made to also offer the website in the remaining five UN languages in the near to medium term. The website also features an event calendar which currently contains all past YIGU presentations and additional information on the date, place (including a map feature), and purpose/context of the events. Ultimately, the calendar will also operate in an interactive mode in the sense that users will be able to post their own YIGU-related events. Further materials that will be available on the YIGU website in the future include teaching materials and the six thematic booklets/brochures.

Fundraising

As already briefly mentioned in May, the YIGU initiative is now supported by the **Katerva Institute**, which awards the Katerva Award for sustainability-related innovations in ten categories (e.g., food security, transportation, gender equality). More than ten jury members of the Award (on all decision levels) are recruited from the YIGU Steering Committee, Scientific Panel, and the wider group of YIGU supporters. According to Reuters, the Katerva Award is the Nobel Prize in the sustainability field. The most recent news is an YIGU representative's membership of the "Solution Panel" of Katerva. This will provide the YIGU initiative with access to a large number of prestigious donors and funding agencies, and it will substantially enhance the possibilities of acquiring private sector funding for the YIGU. Terry Waghorn (CEO of Katerva) suggested introducing me as a representative of Katerva to his network of donors to facilitate the process.

I hope that at least some of the six planned thematic booklets/brochures can be published prior to the UNESCO General Conference in October.

Benno Werlen, Executive Director of YIGU