

# Report to the IYGU network: An update on what has been happening between March and December 2012

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First of all, the good news is that the trip to Kigali, **Rwanda**, from 14-21 December 2012 has been very successful. The Rwandan Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Louise Mushikiwabo, signalled strong interest in taking the lead in the political process and introducing the application to declare 2016 the UN International Year of Global Understanding to the UN General Assembly/UNESCO General Conference. While it looks very promising that the Rwandan Government will officially agree to take the lead, the final decision will be made in the next sitting of the Rwandan Cabinet on 15 January 2013. In preparation for this ...

The second piece of good news is that **Brazil** has emerged as the biggest supporting country in financial and political terms. During my visit in Brazil from 8-24 November I held four presentations: at the 82<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the COEMA/CNI in Brasilia

- Two presentations at the University of São Paulo: “The IGU Initiative for an International Year of Global Understanding” and “Spatial relations and the meaningful construction of geographical realities” to the university director and the geography department
- One presentation at a geographers’ meeting in Presidente Prudente (the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Seminar on Micro-territories in Cities : “Spatial relations and the meaningful construction of geographical realities“
- One presentation to the Confederação Nacional da Indústria<sup>1</sup> (CNI) in Brasília at their 82<sup>a</sup> Reunião do Conselho Temático de Meio Ambiente (COEMA) (the 82<sup>nd</sup> meeting of CNI’s Council for the Environment): “Understanding Globalization and Sustainability”

I was able to network with ...

The third piece of good news is the **formal support by the ICSU<sup>2</sup>**, received in a letter of endorsement dated 10 December 2012. Please find the letter attached to this email/report.

Having provided you with the major and most recent news I will outline what has happened since my last report to you (dated 18 March 2012).

Response from Jeffrey Sachs?

In early April I met ICSU President Prof Lee in Taiwan (a) to discuss the possibilities for linking the IYGU initiative with the Future Earth program<sup>3</sup> and (b) to prepare the IYGU presentation at the

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<sup>1</sup> Website in English:

[http://www.cni.org.br/portal/main.jsp?lumPageId=4028808115EC919A0115FD22C59D0AFB&lumA=1&lumI=4028808115EC919A01161F0A9C1E4E94&locale=en\\_US&doui\\_processActionId=setLocaleProcessAction](http://www.cni.org.br/portal/main.jsp?lumPageId=4028808115EC919A0115FD22C59D0AFB&lumA=1&lumI=4028808115EC919A01161F0A9C1E4E94&locale=en_US&doui_processActionId=setLocaleProcessAction)

<sup>2</sup> International Council for Science ([www.icsu.org](http://www.icsu.org))

<sup>3</sup> “Future Earth is a new 10-year international research initiative that will develop the knowledge for responding effectively to the risks and opportunities of global environmental change and for supporting transformation towards global sustainability in the coming decades” (<http://www.icsu.org/future-earth>). Future Earth has been established through a cooperation between researchers, funders of global change research, and service providers, including ICSU, ISSC, the Belmont Forum, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United

Rio+20 conference in June in Rio de Janeiro. In addition, I was able to give two presentations on the IYGU initiative – to representatives of the **Taiwan** Geographic Information System Center and to the Deputy Minister Dr. Shin-Cheng Yeh and research staff from the Ministry for the Environment.

Prof Lee was also instrumental in furthering the political process of the IYGU initiative 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 would be **two possible ways to proceed** with our application to hold an International Year of Global Understanding in 2016 **through the UN system**.

The **first option** would be to directly approach the UN and obtain the UNESCO's endorsement later (this should be a formality since we have the support of ICSU, ISSC<sup>4</sup> and ICPHS/CIPSH<sup>5</sup>). An application directly to the UN should be submitted by one of its Member States, together with the support of about 20 other countries.

The **second option** would be to obtaining the formal support of at least one UNESCO Member State willing to submit a proposal for consideration by the Executive Board of UNESCO by the end of January 2013. Following the approval by the UNESCO's General Conference the proposal would be sent to the UN. Again, with the support of ICSU, ISSC and ICPHS this track seems feasible.

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. He 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 ICSU. IYGU Steering Committee members **Heide** Hackmann and Gordon McBean both know Ms Brito personally and indicated to follow up with her.

After my return from Taiwan, I fell sick with pneumonia which halted progress on the IYGU front for several weeks. I was also unable to attend **the Rio+20 conference** in June. Nevertheless, IYGU was well-**repre**sented by Luiz Oosterbeek and Inguelore Scheunemann who showed great initiative in ...

At home, however, I had organised a conference on “**Transdisciplinary International Ecological Research on Sustainability**” (TIERS) from 8-10 June 2012 in Jena, Germany. This conference featured renowned academics in the field of sustainability research (e.g. Frans Berkhout, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam) from all five continents, regional-level policymakers from Germany, and young scholars hailing from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. 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, hopefully in late 2013. I would like to acknowledge the ICSU, the IGU, the Friedrich Schiller University Jena, and STIFT for providing generous funding for this important conference.

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Nations University (UNU), and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). More information on this initiative can be found under the above URL.

<sup>4</sup> International Social Science Council (<http://www.worldsocialscience.org/>)

<sup>5</sup> International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies / Conseil International de la Philosophie et des Sciences Humaines ([www.cipsh.org](http://www.cipsh.org))

In April this year I was contacted by/I contacted Terry Waghorn, founder and Chief Executive Officer of **Katerva**, a UK-based company and charity. Katerva is “a global network of action designed to convene, catalyze and accelerate breakthrough solutions to global challenges” (<http://katerva.org/about/mission/>).

International news agency Reuters commented on the Katerva Awards: “If the Nobel Society had an award for sustainability, it would resemble the Katerva Awards, a new international prize for the most promising ideas and efforts to advance the planet toward sustainability”<sup>6</sup>. Katerva promotes its Awards as “the pinnacle of global sustainability recognition. Through them, the best ideas on the planet are identified, refined and accelerated for global impact” (<http://katerva.org/about/mission/>).

The YIGU initiative is currently represented by 15 people – recruited from the YIGU Steering Committee, Scientific Panel and the wider group of YIGU supporters – in various panels assessing the nominations at different levels of decision-making.

For further details on nomination criteria and review processes of the Katerva Awards please see <http://katerva.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Katerva-Evaluation-and-Awards-Process.pdf>

In July – prior to any contact with Rwanda – I travelled to **Luxembourg** with the aim of exploring the option of it becoming the applicant country. I met the President of the Luxembourgian UNESCO delegation, Mr Kremer, the Secretary of State of Luxembourg’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr Longini as well as the UNESCO Chair in Human Rights and dean of the Faculty of Language and Literature, Humanities, Arts and Education at the University of Luxembourg, Prof Lehnens. We concluded the best strategy would be to obtain the university's backing before approaching several ministries for support. Several weeks later, however, it turned out that Luxembourg was not willing to take the lead in the application process; yet, it was supportive of the networking efforts and the search for an applicant country. **Similarly**, my approaching the Slovenian government in July met with interest by the Slovenian government but eventually did not result in a commitment to a leading role in the political process.

**Other countries that are supportive of the YIGU initiative** but refraining from becoming the applicant country are: Austria, Morocco, Slovenia (incl. the other five Green Group Countries: United Arab Emirates, Cape Verde, Costa Rica, Singapore and Iceland), and Brazil.

**What about other countries that had been considered? Do they officially support/formally endorse the YIGU initiative? Or were they just not against it? I think it is very important to be precise about this and not tacitly assuming/imputing their support when they have merely said that the YIGU initiative isn't total rubbish.**

- Germany?
- Monaco?
- **Korea?** “If Korea’s Permanent Mission would be prepared to take action in either way, Prof. Lee believes you have strong support from Prof. Dong-Pil Min, the Science and Technology Ambassador of Korea. Also, Prof. Lee suggested that Dr. Han Seung-Soo, former Prime Minister of Korea and current the Head of the Global Green Growth Institute and member of

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<sup>6</sup> Tonelli, C. (2011, October 28). Finalists named for “Nobel of Sustainability”. [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com) - Environment Forum: Global environmental challenges. Accessed on December 20, 2012, retrieved from <http://blogs.reuters.com/environment/2011/10/28/finalists-named-for-nobel-of-sustainability/>

the UN Secretary General (UNSG) High Level Panel on Global Sustainability, would certainly guide the initiative in its way through the UN system.” (email from 18 Sept 2012 titled “YIGU/Korea”)

- Mali? “Through Adama Samassékou (member of the YIGU Steering Committee), we are still in touch with Mali and its ministry for the environment, but nothing much has happened there since the end of December. This may change once the French version of the brochure is ready.” (email from 18 Sept 2012 titled “YIGU/Korea”)
- Botswana? “Before I went to Luxembourg I was able to take the contacts with Botswana one step further. Through a personal contact with the German ambassador to Botswana we were able to reach the Minister of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism, His Excellency Onkokame Kitso Mokaila. A letter was sent to him explaining the aims and objectives of YIGU and asking to introduce YIGU to the UNESCO and the UN General Assembly. Botswana is very active in the policy for sustainability and is looking for a leading role in this process within Africa.” (from a report dated 15 July 2012 and titled B\_YIGU Report July\_2012)
- Burkina Faso?

According to slide 46 of your Kigali presentation the supporting countries are as follows:

- Morocco: Deputy Minister (Environment/Foreign Affairs)
- South Korea: Permanent mission at the UN; Ministry for re-unification
- Botswana: Minister for Environment
- Peru: National Science Council
- Slovenia: Foreign Ministry/Member states of the green group countries (Costa Rica, United Arab Emirates, Cape Verde, Island, Singapore)
- Luxembourg: National UNESCO Commission
- Austria: Ministry for Education and Research
- Brazil: CNI, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, OIE

In August I held two presentations on the YIGU initiative at the **International Geographical Congress** (IGC) in Cologne, Germany, running from 26-30 August. One of these presentations was to a general audience, the other to the General Assembly.

Through the first presentation contacts could be established with Austria, Canada, France, Rwanda, Turkey and Tunisia). I presented the revamped YIGU website with the brochure for download in five of the six official UN languages (the Arabic brochure being work in progress) plus Portuguese. The website also features a space to upload publications (<http://www.global-understanding.de/get-involved/publications/>) and an (interactive) blog/discussion forum where people can post entries and comment on entries made by others (<http://www.global-understanding.de/get-involved/discussion-forum/>). Technical provisions have been made to also offer the **website** in the remaining five UN languages in the near to medium term. In addition, the website features an event calendar which currently contains all YIGU presentations of the past and additional information on the date, place (including a map feature) and purpose/context of the event where YIGU was presented. 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 in the future will be available on the YIGU website

include **teaching materials** and **the six theme brochures**, the editorial teams for which have been set up now and will shortly begin their work so that the theme brochures can be published in XXXX.

As indicated the beginning of this report, my travels to **Brazil** from 8-24 November yielded successful outcomes. Support for the political process was obtained from the Ministry of External Relations<sup>7</sup>, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation<sup>8</sup>, the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture<sup>9</sup> (OEI) and the Confederação Nacional da Indústria (CNI), the national industry confederation. 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 delegation. Political support by the Ibero-American General Secretariat<sup>10</sup> (SEGIB) and the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization<sup>11</sup> (ACTO) hinges on the Brazilian Government backing the IYGU initiative. As soon as we have a positive decision by the Cabinet of the Rwandan Government, I will get in touch with Ambassador Maria Laura Rocha in Paris.

In addition, there is the prospect of the CNI helping to tap potential funding sources within Brazil and/or becoming a major 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 Environment and Sustainability, Shelley de Souza Carneiro, invited me to present IYGU at the Brazilian sustainability summit in Manaus in the first half of 2013. In return I asked him about CNI's potential for supporting IYGU in political and financial respects, especially concerning support for a possible lead in the political application process by Rwanda. 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 through UNESCO.

**What about the meeting with Dr Jorge Chediek (Coordinator UN and UNDP Representative/Brasil)?  
What was the outcome?**

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<sup>7</sup> Official website of the Ministry of Foreign Relations: <http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/> (in Portuguese)

<sup>8</sup> Official website of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation: <http://www.mct.gov.br/> (in Portuguese)

<sup>9</sup> The OEI is an intergovernmental organisation, comprising the Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking countries within America and Europe, plus Equatorial Guinea in Africa. The OEI is concerned with education, culture and human rights. Its objectives include a quality education for all, cultural diversity, solidarity and peace. For further information on the OEI see their website <http://www.oei.es/> (in Spanish) and for their cooperation with UNESCO see [http://portal.unesco.org/geography/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=8997&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/geography/en/ev.php-URL_ID=8997&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html).

<sup>10</sup> Secretaría General Iberoamericana <http://segib.org/> SEGIB is linked with OEI: In 1991, the First Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government established the Ibero-American Conference as a forum for political and diplomatic consensus and cooperation for development among its members. In 2005, the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB) was created as the body responsible for coordinating the system under the direction of a Secretary General appointed by the Ibero-American heads of state. The Ibero-American Community first became active in the mid-twentieth century establishing the OEI. For further details please refer to [http://segib.org/documentos/esp/ingles\\_web\\_hojas.pdf](http://segib.org/documentos/esp/ingles_web_hojas.pdf), for example.

<sup>11</sup> The ACTO is an international organization aimed at promoting sustainable development of the Amazon Basin. The member states are Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname and Venezuela. The organization has been established in 1995 to strengthen the implementation of the 1978 Amazon Cooperation Treaty. ACTO's English website can be found at <http://www.otca.org.br/en/>.

**Rwanda:** Contact established in Cologne; Edith Mukakayumba followed up on this, flew from Montréal to Kigali and met government officials/delegates; successful networking

To be added after return from Kigali on 21 Dec 2012. The following paragraphs in red are suggestions:

To meet the set timeframe for an IYGU in 2016 a country has to declare its willingness to lead the application process in the near future.

Concerning the very promising recent negotiations an appropriate candidate for this position would be Rwanda.

A decisive contribution for these negotiations with the political authorities was made by Edith Mukakayumba (President of la Maison de la Géographie in Montreal, Scientific Panel of IYGU). Soon after the first preliminary talks between her and Prof. Benno Werlen (Executive Director of IYGU) the IGC in Cologne in August 2013 of Rwanda being a possible applicant country Edith Mukakayumba established contact with the Rwandan Ambassador in Canada, Mrs Edda Mukabagwiza. Following the recommendations of the Rwandan representatives in Canada, further political authorities and government officials in Rwanda were approached, including 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). The successful networking by Edith Mukakayumba resulted in an invitation of Prof Benno Werlen and Prof Eduardo de Mulder (Executive Director of the UN International Year of Planet Earth 2007-2009) to Kigali and the opportunity to present IYGU to several government representatives there during the last week before Christmas.

During the following days the initiative was presented to Hon. to Mrs Jeanne d'Arc Mujawamariya (Minister of Education), Hon. Mrs Louise Mushikiwabo ( Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation), and Mr Stanislas Kamanzi (Minister of Natural Ressources) as well as Mrs Edda Mukabagwiza, Christine Nkulikiyinka (Ambassador of Rwanda in Germany), Mr Robert Masozera, Mr Jacques Kabalé , Prof Silas Lwakabamba (Rector of the National University of Rwanda) and other official representatives of the Rwandan Government. Because of the fantastic arrangements and networking of Sylvie Zainabo Kayitesi (Deputy Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Rwanda/Vice Chair of the African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights) 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 Ministry of Foreign Affairs make a submission at the next Cabinet meeting on January 15, 2013. Even though the final decision is made by the Cabinet, it seems IYGU has enough support within the Government to be approved by the Cabinet.

Further news are concerning the structure of IYGU. I am currently putting together a **Political Panel** to help with the political application process in the months ahead. People serving on this panel would need to have good contacts to the applicant country (Rwanda) and the biggest supporting country (Brazil). The first people who agreed to be on the panel are Sybelle De Jongh and Ingelore

Scheunemann, both from Brazil and with very good connections to the federal government in Brazil. Overall, the Political Panel should comprise up to five people to ensure that coordination and organization among panel members remain feasible.

In addition, progress is being made with respect to the **Continental Centers**. The existing centers are as follows:

- America: Prof. Dr. Irasema Alcantara-Ayala, Mexico City
- Europe: Prof. Dr. Doris Wastl-Walter, Berne, Switzerland
- Central and Eastern Europe (sub-center): Prof. Dr. Sebastian Lentz, Leipzig, Germany
- Oceania: Prof. Dr. Robyn Longhurst, Hamilton, New Zealand

Candidates for the vacant centers are:

- Africa: Tunisia (in late Sept 2012): Habib Ben Boubaker (Chairman of the Association of Tunisian Geographers) tried for a meeting of BW with the Director General of ALECSO
- Asia: China: potential visit in mid-Feb 2013; contact with secretary general of GSC (Geographical Society of China?) through Prof. Dr. Shangyi Zhou, School of Geography, Beijing Normal University
- Europe: Nijmegen (in negotiations); contact: Prof. Huib Ernste, Chair, Human Geography, Radboud University Nijmegen

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

- World Social Science Report 2013: The IYGU initiative features prominently in the IGU contribution (200 out of 800 words). The text has been drafted by Mike Meadows, Vladimir Kolossov and I, and I wish to thank Mike and Vladimir for the work they have been putting into this.
- Publication in issue 16 of *Public Service Review: European Science and Technology*: Werlen, B. (2012). Global Understanding. *Public Service Review: European Science and Technology*, (16), 152–153 (<http://edition.pagesuite-professional.co.uk/Launch.aspx?EID=a0f13986-9dd2-4713-9cb9-0ab729d026b9>).
- Invitation to write two pages of editorial in each edition of *Public Service Review: European Science and Technology* (distributed quarterly in 2013)
- The IYGU banner with hyperlink on the Natural Sciences page of [www.scienceomega.com](http://www.scienceomega.com) (<http://www.scienceomega.com/discipline/natural-sciences>), to run from November 2012 until December 2013
- ICSU's president-elect, Prof Gordon McBean introduced IYGU to the "Future Earth" program and proposed that the IYGU initiative be a component of this program.
- SAGE will publish the six theme IYGU brochures

Further good news involve the **fundraising** for IYGU. As mentioned above, CNI's Executive Manager Environment and Sustainability, Shelley de Souza Carneiro, has been approached for funding; the specificities of which are still to be confirmed.

In addition, potential founding sources might be accessed through Katerva. Terry Waghorn (CEO of Katerva) suggested that instead of introducing IYGU to as a project, he will introduce me as a representative of Katerva to his network of donors, which includes prestigious and renowned foundations such as the Bill Gates Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation as well as individual donors, for example, Jack Dangermond (ESRI). This strategy will ensure that I enjoy the backing of Katerva when approaching potential donors, which should increase the chances of the fundraising efforts being successful. In return, Terry asked me to become a member of Katerva's Solution Center and the Expert Panel on transport to which I agreed.

**Future activities** include establishing contact with various national UNESCO delegations in case Rwanda confirms its role as an applicant country. Should it turn out that Rwanda is not willing to take the lead, Costa Rica is the alternative and contacts there will be followed up in this case.

I will accept the invitation by Shelley Carneiro and attend the Brazilian Sustainability Summit in Manaus in the first half of 2013. From 6-10 May 2013 ACFAS (Association Francophone pour le savoir) will host the 31<sup>st</sup> Congress savoir frontier with four to five people from IYGU presenting at this conference. Further presentations of the IYGU are planned at the Taiwan Geosciences Assembly in Taipei in May 2013.