

## **Report of the my activities in New York from June 30 to July 4, 2014**

During the meeting with Ana Persic, at the UN's UNESCO office, we focused on four points. First, we discussed the status of the IYGU documentation (thematic outline, organizational structure, budget and fundraising, regional action center, outreach). Ana believes that this fine and even mentioned that the UNIY's preparation has been excellent. Second, the time line was drafted and the role of the UNESCO office identified. In keeping with the UNESCO General Conference's declaration, the office is 'obliged' to prepare the best framework for the application process, but will not play an active role in this. The rhythm and time line of the application process depend fully on the applicant country and successful lobbying of the different voting groups. Third, we discussed the text of the draft UN resolution. According to Ana, the draft is absolutely in line with the UNESCO resolution. Only the sentence about the embedding of IYGU in the UNESCO organization needs to be discussed with the UNESCO science sector in Paris. The fourth and last point was the exact determination of the role of the science sector in the implementation of IYGU in 2106, in its preparation in 2015, and in the harvest year 2017. The potential range varies from intensive management, including a financial contribution to UNESCO, to a very loose relationship in the form of a contact point with a small IYGU budget.

The meeting with the ambassador of Mali (Thursday, July 3, 10 a.m.) took place at very short notice, less than an hour before the meeting at the embassy. H.E. Sékou Kasse asked for a short summary and we discussed the different implications for Mali (Regional Action center at Bamako) and the possibility of supporting Rwanda's lobbying process inside the African Group and beyond. The ambassador unequivocally assured me of his intense cooperation with the Permanent Mission of Rwanda in respect of the lobbying process inside and outside the African voting group.

The meeting at the embassy of Portugal (Thursday, July 3, 12 a.m.) with the ambassador, H.E. Mr. Alvaro Mendonça e Moura was as well very productive. After a short summary of the IYGU, I mentioned that the main concern is to take the IYGU as quickly as possible to the UN GA. The ambassador sees one major obstacle in this respect: The strong opposition to too many UN Years, days, and decades, especially among the countries in voting group 1 (Western Europe, North America,

and Oceania) and specifically among the EU countries. He emphasized that it would be very important to gain the support of Germany, especially as an opinion leader in the group of EU countries. He too assured me of his unequivocal support for the project, but in order to be involved in a broader lobbying process, he needs assurance that there won't be any (strong) opposition from the other members of voting group 1. If this condition is assured, he will be very supportive in bringing the Lusitanian countries on board, as well as in taking an active role inside the SEGIB group.

The meeting with the ambassador of Brazil, H.E. Antonio Aguiar da Patriota, and his secretary, Adriana Telles Ribeiro (Thursday, July 3, 3:30 p.m.), was very friendly. He was very well informed about the project and didn't need a long summary. He was interested in the implications of the IYGU and possibility of promoting it. Regarding the first point, he sees the innovative potential of the IYGU in respect of supporting the core of the UN's environmental and sustainability politics. He was less optimistic with regard to the second point. When I said that my main concern was to bring it as quickly as possible through the GA, he made similar comments to those that the Portuguese ambassador had made. He suggested first getting in touch with the German ambassador for the same reasons as mentioned by the Portuguese ambassador. He further suggested highlighting the innovative character of the IYGU and its support potential for UN politics in the exact way that the EU and other member countries of group 1 have requested in respect of future UN years.

The third point Mr. Patriota made in this respect was that the main problem is to attract attention for the IYGU and to attract enough sponsors, because there are so many other dossiers on the way. He also emphasized that it would be very good to have a strong partner, besides Africa and LA, in each regional group, especially Asia, and to have at least one Anglo-Saxon country on board.

Concerning the support of the Asian group, in addition to the promised support by Japan and China, I took a first step by meeting the Korean ambassador, H.E. Mr. Oh Joon, and his secretary, Changhoon Yuh (Thursday, July 3, 6 p.m.). He was quite well informed about the Korean pre-history of the IYGU at this mission, where I had already met some of his predecessor's staff in 2012. I told him the potential reasons for Korea stepping back at the time (the topical perspective was too wide). After my summary, he had some highly valuable suggestions on how it could be 'sold' to other

missions. Towards the end of the 30-minute conversation, he said that Korea would certainly support Rwanda due to his predecessor's very positive personal comments and the strong recommendation by Prof. Wo-ik Yu. However, their engagement in strongly lobbying for and with Rwanda inside the Asian group will depend on a closer examination and reconstruction of their reasons for stepping back in 2012. He also told me that the former Korean Prime Minister will visit him on July 4. He is a good friend of Prof. Yuan-tse Lee (president of the ICSU and Patron of IYGU), and a member of the UN advisory board for environmental politics. I guessed that Yuan had told him about the IYGU and I told the ambassador that, in 2012, Mr. Lee recommended I get in touch with his friend regarding Korea's hesitation. I did not at that time do so, because I regarded Korea's rather negative answer as definitive at that time. In short, there is a high probability that Korea will become a strong supporter inside the Asia group.

It is very important to note that all these questions about EU are not specifically based on the IYGU, but on voting group 1 believing that there are too many UNIYs. The hesitation of all three the ambassadors is therefore not based on the IYGU's lack of quality but rather on the countries of voting group 1 regarding UN days, weeks, years, and decades an inflationary, thus devaluating the original idea of these events for UN purposes. Consequently, they want to prevent as many of them as possible. The main argument should thus be that IYGU will prepare the daily basis for the UN's post-2015 agenda and, in this sense, will support the UN environmental policy fully. The IYGU is not just another one-topic year like so many of the UNIYs are, for example, the year of the potato, corn, chemistry, and crystallography. The IYGU really addresses the core of the UN's policy and is thus fully in line with the European countries' new, numerically reduced UNIY policy. We have to show the extent to which the IYGU supports the general environmental and other UN programs. I believe this is easy to do, and I told all the ambassadors how they could emphasize this and that I would explain this to the ambassadors of voting group 1.

On Friday I tried – as suggested by the foreign ministry in Vilnius – to get in touch with the Lithuanian ambassador. Despite the recommendation, I was not successful and will try again during this week.

I don't think that it is worth insisting on meeting the Peruvian ambassador, as the foreign ministry didn't establish contact with the permanent mission.

Right after the meeting with the Brazilian ambassador, I tried to call the German embassy. Since the personal assistant of the ambassador was not able to answer the call, I just left a message explaining my request. Will call again this week.

After the meeting with the Portuguese ambassador, I immediately wrote to the supportive minister of the regional government of Thuringia, a good friend of the German vice-chancellor Sigmar Gabriel. I asked if he could get in touch with Frank Walter Steinmeier (foreign minister), who is also from the SPD, and inform him that a positive German position at the UN would be very crucial for the IYGU. I suggested that Frank Walter Steinmeier should ask the foreign minister to tell 'his' ambassador that he should act accordingly. I have no idea whether this will work, but I will call the ambassador during this week and will tell him whom I have already met and how supportive they are. Today I talked to his secretary and we agreed that I will send all the documentation I submitted to the mentioned ambassadors and formulate my request in form of an email.

On Friday July 4, I called Rupert Maclean of Australia and ask him to get in touch with his ambassador at the UN. He answered promptly and positively, and I'm optimistically awaiting the ambassador's answer in the coming days.

I will moreover try to get in touch with the permanent mission of Slovenia through the foreign ministry in Ljubljana (voting group 2), as well as those of Austria and Switzerland (voting group 1) through contacts established for the UNESCO process.

Japan is informed about the status of the application process and I guess it will be again very supportive as they have been in the UNESCO process.

I think that the IYGU is well on track. All the contacted persons know that Jeanne d'Arc and Etienne are the contact persons in the Permanent Mission of Rwanda.