

# International Geographical Union Virtual General Assembly (VGA)

21<sup>st</sup> August 2020

## Draft Minutes

### Technical Information

President Yukio Himiyama invited Dr Pankaj Kumar to convey technical information to delegates to facilitate smooth participation and streaming of the proceedings of the IGU Virtual General Assembly. Himiyama expressed his hope that the meeting would be free from technical glitches as IGU conducts its first ever Virtual General Assembly.

### Welcome by the President

The IGU 2020 Virtual General Assembly (VGA) was convened online and hosted on the Zoom platform. The session was chaired by IGU President Yukio Himiyama, who welcomed delegates, observers, and guests to the assembly. The VGA commenced at 07.30 GMT.

### Roll Call

Representatives of 37 countries were present. In addition, there were approximately 700 observing the meeting via the dedicated *YouTube* channel.

Countries Represented at the 2020 Virtual IGU General Assembly		
New Zealand	Turkey	Germany
Bangladesh	South Korea	Saudi Arabia
India	Poland	Switzerland
China-Beijing	Romania	France
Japan	China-Hong Kong	Vietnam
South Africa	Namibia	Russia
USA	Luxembourg	Spain
Australia	Israel	Serbia
Portugal	Italy	Hungary
Colombia	Australia	Venezuela
Ireland	Austria	United Kingdom
Slovenia	Finland	
Croatia	Belgium	

### Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda, previously circulated to National Committees, was *approved unanimously*.

## Announcement of Election Results

President Himiyama announced the results of the recent e-ballot for the vacant posts of President and Vice-Presidents for period 2020-2024. There was a single nomination for the post of President and, for the four vacant Vice-President posts, a total of five nominations were received. In all, 49 votes were cast, with the following results:

<i>President</i>	
<i>South Africa</i> – Prof. Michael Meadows	<b>49</b>
<i>Vice-President</i>	
<i>France</i> —Prof. Nathalie Lemarchand	<b>41</b>
<i>USA</i> —Prof. Holly Barcus	<b>38</b>
<i>Turkey</i> -- Prof. Barbaros Gönençgil	<b>35</b>
<i>Switzerland</i> –Prof. Celine Rozenblat	<b>35</b>
<i>UK</i> -- Prof Mike Elliot	25

Accordingly, Professor Michael Meadows was elected as IGU President, and Professors Nathalie Lemarchand, Holly Barcus, Barbaros Gönençgil and Céline Rozenblat were elected as IGU Vice-Presidents for the period 2020-2024. This outcome was noted and approved by the VGA.

### Approval of the Minutes of the 2016 General Assembly

The assembly *unanimously approved* the minutes of the IGU General Assembly held in Beijing, China, in August 2016.

### Approval of New National Member Countries

Secretary-General and Treasurer R.B Singh and Vice-President Rubén Lois Gonzales tabled applications for IGU membership that had been received from representatives of the following countries since the last General Assembly, *viz.* Samoa, China-Macau, Kyrgyz Republic and Namibia. It was noted that these four countries had already been formally accepted as IGU full member countries by e-ballot. More recently, applications for national membership were received from the Dominican Republic and Colombia. The IGU Executive Committee recommended Full Membership for the Dominican Republic and Associate Membership for Colombia. Himiyama appraised the VGA regarding the circumstances underlying the Executive Committee’s interim recommendation of Associate Membership for Colombia. The VGA *unanimously approved the EC’s recommendations.*

### Approval of Commissions, Task Forces, Chairs, and Steering Committees

Secretary-General R.B Singh and First Vice-President Joos Droogleever-Fortuijn presented recommendations formulated by the IGU Executive Committee regarding renewal (i.e. continuation of activities) of Commissions and Task Forces for the 2020-2024 period. Singh explained the Executive Committee recommendations in the tabled document (see below).

Droogleever-Fortuijn noted that good reports had been submitted by most IGU Commissions, and all Commissions and Task Forces were recommended for continuation for the period 2020-2024. This was approved by the VGA.

Droogleever-Fortuijn noted that in some Commissions adjustments to the steering committees would be required to ensure that individuals do not continue terms of office in violation of the IGU Statutes. Droogleever-Fortuijn also encouraged Steering Committee representation from the global south, low income countries and to give priority to gender balance. Droogleever-Fortuijn also noted that, since the last GA, IGU had established several new Commissions viz. Agricultural Geography and Land Engineering, Geography for Future Earth, Global Understanding, Research Methods in Geography, and African Studies. The Commission on Mountain Studies has been re-established with a new chair.

As Chair of Commission Excellence Award Committee (a sub-committee of the EC) Droogleever-Fortuijn announced that the IGU Commission and Task Force Excellence Award for the year 2019 had been awarded to the IGU Commission on Biogeography and Biodiversity.

<b>2020 General Assembly Actions on IGU Commissions and Task Forces</b>			
<b><i>Code</i></b>	<b><i>Commission/Task Force</i></b>	<b><i>Chairperson 2020-24</i></b>	<b><i>Action</i></b>
C20.01	African Studies	Dr. Inocent Moyo, South Africa	Renewed
C20.02	Agricultural Geography and Land Engineering	Professor Yansui Liu, China	Renewed
C20.03	Applied Geography	Dr John R. Lombard, USA	Renewed X
C20.04	Biogeography and Biodiversity	Dr Suraj Mal, India	Renewed
C20.05	Climatology	Professor Jun Matsumoto, Japan	Renewed
C20.06	Coastal Systems	Professor Colin Woodroffe, Australia	Renewed X
C20.07	Cold and High Altitude Regions	Professor Tatiana Vlasova, Russia	Renewed
C20.08	Cultural Approach in Geography	Professor Emeritus Je-Hun Ryu, Republic of Korea	Renewed X
C20.09	Dynamics of Economic Spaces	Dr. Nuri Yavan, Turkey	Renewed
C20.10	Environment Evolution	Redzhep Kurbanov, Russia	Renewed
C20.11	Gender and Geography: Care, Connection and Change	Dr. Anindita Datta, India	Renewed
C20.12	Geographical Education	Dr. Chew-Hung Chang, Singapore Michael Solem, USA	Renewed
C20.13	Geographical Information Science	Prof. Fenzhen Su, China Dr Daniel Sui, USA	Renewed
C20.14	Geography for Future Earth: Coupled Human-Earth Systems for Sustainability	Professor Wenwu Zhao, China	Renewed
C20.15	Geography of Governance	Professor Carlos Nunes Silva, Portugal	Renewed

C20.16	Geography of Information, Innovation and Technology	Professor Tommi Inkinen, Finland	Renewed
C20.17	Geography of Tourism, Leisure, and Global Change	Professor Julie Wilson, Spain	Renewed
C20.18	Geoheritage	Professor Dongying Wei, China	Renewed
C20.19	Geomorphology and Society: Past, Present and Croatia Future	Prof. Dr. Margreth Keiler, Switzerland Professor Sonia Faivre, Croatia	Renewed
C20.20	Global Change and Human Mobility	Professor Josefina Domínguez Mujica, Spain	Renewed X
C20.21	Global Understanding	Professor Benno Werlen, Germany	Renewed
C20.22	Hazard and Risk	Professor Takashi Oguchi, Japan	Renewed
C20.23	Health and Environment	Professor Clive Sabel, Denmark Professor Hellen Gurgel, Brasil	Renewed
C20.24	History of Geography	Professor Marcella Schmidt di Friedberg, Italy	Renewed
C20.25	Islands	Professor Eric Clark, Sweden	Renewed
C20.26	Karst	Dr. Eko Haryono, Indonesia	Renewed
C20.27	Land Degradation and Desertification	Dr. Matija Zorn, Slovenia	Renewed X
C20.28	Landscape Analysis and Landscape Planning	Professor Marine Elbakidze, Sweden	Renewed
C20.29	Land Use and Land Cover Change	Professor Monica Ștefania Dumitrașcu, Romania	Renewed
C20.30	Latin American and Caribbean Studies	Prof. Geog. Juan Manuel Delgado, Perú	Renewed
C20.31	Local and Regional Development	Professor Jerzy Bański, Poland	Renewed
C20.32	Marginalization, Globalization, and Regional and Local Responses	Prof. Steve Déry, Canada	Renewed
C20.33	Mediterranean Basin	Professor Anastasia Stratigeia, Greece	Renewed
C20.34	Modeling Geographical Systems	Professor Dr. Min Chen, P.R.China	Renewed under new chair
C20.35	Mountain Studies	Dr.Fausto O. Sarmiento, USA	Re-established
C20.36	Political Geography	Dr Virginie Mamadouh, The Netherlands, Professor Adriana Dorfman, Brazil	Renewed
C20.37	Population Geography	Professor Etienne Piguet, Switzerland	Renewed X
C20.38	Research Method in Geography	Professor Dan Malkinson, Israel Ms Chiara Giubilaro, Italy	Newly Established

C20.39	Sustainability of Rural Systems	Professor Serge Schmitz, Belgium, Professor Valerià PAÛLM, Spain	Renewed X
C20.40	Toponymy	Professor Cosimo Palagiano, Italy	Renewed
C20.41	Transport and Geography	Dr. Frederic Dobruszkes, Belgium	Renewed X
C20.42	Urban Commission: Re-Thinking cities and the urban: from the global to the local	Professor Dr. Maria Jose Piñeira-Mantiñán, Spain	Renewed
C20.43	Water Sustainability	Professor Frank Winde, South Africa	Renewed
T20.01	Centennial and Sesquicentennial Task Force	Professor Vladimir Kolosov, Russia	Renewed
T20.02	Olympiad Task Force	Mrs Susan Lomas, UK Dr Su-min Shen, China-Taipe	Renewed
T20.03	Young and Early Career Geographers Task Force	Dr Komali Yenneti, UK	Renewed

Note: X = Renewed subject to amendments to Steering Committee membership to be confirmed subsequently

## **Report of the President on the Period 2016-2020**

President Yukio Himiyama summarized the major activities of the IGU over the inter-congress period as follows.

### **1. IGU Executive Committee Meetings 2016-2020:**

The IGU Executive Committee generally holds two to three meetings a year. The meetings are normally hosted by one of the EC members or local organizers of a congress/conference of IGU. The following EC meetings have been held since 2016 Beijing IGC:

**2016**-Third EC meeting in 2016 at Maison de la Recherche, Paris, France, 14-17 November.

**2017**-First EC meeting in 2017 at Québec City Conference Centre, Québec, Canada, 7-11 May. Second EC meeting in 2017 at University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands, 6-10 September.

**2018**-First EC meeting in 2018 at Gakushi Kaikan, Tokyo, and Sendai, Japan, 9-12 April. Second EC meeting in 2018 at Hôtel Château Laurier, Québec City, Canada, 4-6 August. Third EC meeting in 2018 at Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India, 1-4 December.

**2019**-First EC meeting in 2019 at City University in Dublin and at National University of Ireland in Galway, Ireland, 13-15 May. Second EC meeting in 2019 at Point Hotel Istanbul, Turkey, 28 Sept.-1 Oct.

**2020**-First Zoom EC meeting in 2020, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> April 2020. Second Zoom EC Meeting in 2020, 20<sup>th</sup> May & 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2020. Third Zoom EC Meeting in 2020, 17<sup>th</sup> June 2020. Fourth Zoom EC meeting in 2020, 20<sup>th</sup> August 2020.

### **2. General Assembly**

The IGU Statutes state: *"The General Assembly shall hold an ordinary meeting, normally about once every four years, whenever possible at the time and place of an International Geographical Congress.... The date and place of the meeting shall be determined by the*

*General Assembly at its previous meeting or, if not so determined, arranged by the Executive Committee...."* The next GA determined by the GA at the 2016 Beijing IGC was scheduled to be held during the 2020 Istanbul IGC. As everybody knows, the Istanbul IGC has been postponed for one year due to COVID-19. However, thanks to recent progress in communication technology and with the support of the Organizing Committee of the Istanbul IGC, the IGU EC managed to arrange a Virtual General Assembly in place of the originally planned on-site GA. A virtual online meeting has some advantages, such as safety from pandemic, low or no cost of attendance, and no need for travel, but there are also serious constraints, such as inconvenient time zones and the important difficulties surrounding discussion, voting, and maintaining a stable online environment. Some of the regular agenda items of the IGU General Assembly, such as the election of President and Vice-Presidents, have been completed by e-ballot. The items that require face-to-face meetings, such as financial matters, will be tabled in the General Assembly in the IGC Istanbul 2021.

### **3. National Membership.**

The IGU Statutes allow for four categories of membership, namely Full membership (pay dues regularly), Associate Membership (do not, or have not paid fees, but are representatives of their national geographical community and are regularly in contact with IGU); Observer member (contact, usually via email, who does not formally represent geographers in their country, or where full membership has lapsed); Corporate membership. New full members since 2016 Beijing IGC are Samoa, China-Macau, Kyrgyz Republic, and Namibia, while Vietnam was re-activated in 2018.

### **4. Commissions and Task Forces**

The IGU Statutes say "*Commissions shall be established for the study of a specific problem or for the accomplishment of a task which requires international collaboration. Commissions shall promote individual and group research work, encourage the exchange of relevant documents and information, and organize conferences, meetings and, where appropriate, field excursions, both between Congresses and during International Geographical Congresses.*" Thus, commissions are regarded as the main locomotives for research and other activities in the IGU.

### **5. Conferences**

#### **5.1 2018 IGU Regional Conference, Québec**

The 2018 IGU Regional Conference was held in conjunction with the annual meetings of the Canadian Association of Geographers (CAG) and the National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE) from August 6th to 10th, 2018 at the Québec City Convention Center. More than 1,300 participants gathered to exchange and discuss the latest research and teaching advances in geography. It was the first time that an IGU conference has been held in Canada (Montreal, 1972) in more than 45 years. The 15th International Geography Olympiad (iGeo) was held in Québec City and the Charlevoix region shortly before the Conference. Nearly 300 students, team leaders and volunteers from 40 countries and 43 teams participated in this prestigious event. The iGeo was an excellent opportunity to showcase the geographical skills and understandings of the world's best geography students, as well as to reward student excellence.

## **5.2 2020 International Geographical Congress (IGC), Istanbul, Turkey**

The 2020 International Geographical Congress (IGC), Istanbul, Turkey, scheduled from 17<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> August 2020, has been postponed to 16<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> August 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **5.3 Thematic Conference**

In 2017 the Executive Committee issued official guidelines for the organization and conduct of IGU Thematic Conferences, as follows: *It must be genuinely international, should have a clear theme or topic that is of broad interest, and should specifically involve at least four IGU commissions. The EC must approve each thematic conference, and applications should normally be made 12 to 18 months in advance; any overlap or conflict, either in timing or in terms of location, with other IGU events should be avoided. An IGU thematic conference can be proposed to the EC by one or more commissions and/or by a national committee; indeed, the involvement of the relevant national committee(s) in these thematic conferences is considered essential. Every effort should be made to encourage broad international participation. There should not normally be more than one thematic conference during an IGU Congress or Regional Conference year, and not more than two in a year in which there is no other major IGU event.*

The following Thematic Conferences have been held since 2016: IGU Thematic Conference on Urbanization, Health and Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Goals, Hyderabad 17-19 March; IGU Thematic Conference on Geographies of Peace, La Paz, Bolivia, 23--25 September 2017; IGU Thematic Conference on Land Use/Cover Changes, Biodiversity, Health and Environment, Local and Regional Development, Bucharest & Tulcea, 11-15 September 2017; IGU Thematic Conference on Practical Geography and XXI Century Challenges, Moscow 4-6 June 2018; IGU Thematic Conference on Transformation of Traditional Cultural Landscapes, Koper, Slovenia, 20-26 September 2019

## **6. ISC (International Science Council)**

President Himiyama and (the then) Secretary-General Meadows participated in the ICSU 32nd General Assembly, ISSC Extraordinary General Assembly, Joint ICSU-ISSC Meeting and associated events in Taipei, 21-28 October 2017. On Thursday 26th October, the Joint ICSU-ISSC meeting took the momentous decision to merge into a single organisation to take science and social science forward in an evolving global context. The founding General Assembly of the International Science Council from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> July 2018 was attended by Himiyama, Meadows, and Vice-President Lemarchand.

## **7. Further comments**

Himiyama went on to note that COVID-19 still prevails throughout the world. No IGU-related meetings have been possible since April this year. The IGU Executive Committee planned to hold its first meeting of this year on 1st and 2<sup>nd</sup> April in Istanbul, but it had to be cancelled. Instead, the EC has held four online meetings in 2020 using the Zoom platform, as follows: first meeting (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, & 9<sup>th</sup> April), second meeting (20<sup>th</sup> May & 3<sup>rd</sup> June), third meeting (17<sup>th</sup> June) in 2020, fourth meeting (20<sup>th</sup> August). The online EC meetings held so far have been more efficient than expected, although they were very congested due to the numerous items that needed to be discussed before the end of the

term of the 2016-2020 Executive Committee, especially under the difficult situation caused by the postponement of the IGC Istanbul 2020 to August 2021 due to COVID-19.

Among the many issues discussed in these meetings, Himiyama highlighted the IGU Honors and Awards. In the past there have been three IGU awards, but one of them, namely *Mattei Dogan Foundation Prize in Human Geography*, has been dormant for a decade, so it has been discontinued. The guidelines for the IGU Honors and Awards Committee have now been revised and, with the conclusion of the term of office of its chair, Professor Ruth Fincher, a new Committee has been established under IGU Past President Ron Abler as its chair. The Committee is responsible for the nominations of individuals for:

1. *IGU Lauréat d'honneur*, to recognize individuals who have achieved particular distinction or who have rendered outstanding service in the work of the IGU or in international geography.
2. *The IGU Planet and Humanity Medal* to honor individuals (not necessarily geographers) who have made outstanding contributions to peace, welfare or sustainability.
3. Such other awards as the IGU may from time to time establish.

Himiyama announced the 2020 awards as follows: *IGU Lauréats d'honneur* to Professors Joos Droogleever-Fortuijn (Netherlands) and Yoshitaka Ishikawa (Japan) on the recommendation by the out-going Honors and Awards Committee. The incoming Committee is responsible for the receipt and evaluation of additional nominations for the 2021 awards, as well as nominations for the awards to be presented in 2022 and 2024. The EC also discussed a proposal for new IGU awards forwarded by the out-going Chair of the Committee for new IGU awards. The EC has decided to initiate two new awards, namely: *IGU Early Career Award in Geography* and *IGU Award for Distinguished Geographic Practice*. The new Honors and Awards Committee will be asked to realize them. It is hoped that these Honors and Awards are duly used to promote geography and geography education.

Himiyama went on to comment that COVID-19 has dealt a devastating blow to both international and domestic meetings. However, the increase in availability of online virtual meetings that has resulted now offers great opportunities to academics and students who have geographic, financial or other kinds of difficulties to attend such meetings in person. An increasing number of meetings have become available online. For example, the 6<sup>th</sup> High Level Forum of UN-GGIM (United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management) in the UK in April was replaced by a series of Virtual High-Level Forum Events which it was possible to attend at no cost. This is only one example of a high-level meeting becoming more open and accessible to the public, which can be taken advantage of in our activities. UN-GGIM helps developing countries to prepare standard geospatial data infrastructure projects to obtain support from the World Bank. The International Cartographic Association (ICA) is playing a leading role in this body and IGU submits an activity report to UN-GGIM annually via ICA. The inclusion of education and science on the agenda of UN-GGIM is to be welcomed, especially given the intention to contribute to sustainable development in general, and to the SDGs in particular. Those interested in contributing to UN-GGIM are kindly asked to contact the IGU President.



Finally, Himiyama called the assembly's attention to another online event entitled "Engaging with Science: Building partnerships for a sustainable future", which obviously corresponds to SDG 17 (Partnerships). It is a panel discussion held in the "International Schools Debates" forum organized annually by Trust for Sustainable Living (TSL), a global education trust centred in the UK (<https://trustforsustainableliving.org/about-us>). The whole event was held online for the first time because of COVID-19, but allowed more schools to participate by eliminating barriers such as high travel costs and visa restrictions, as well as reducing the carbon footprint of the event. The International Science Council (ISC) nominated IGU President Himiyama to represent the science community as a panellist for this discussion on education, science and partnership which is recorded, see: <https://trustforsustainableliving.org/take-part/the-debates>

Himiyama expressed his deep appreciation for the invaluable opportunity to serve the IGU as the 25<sup>th</sup> President and noted with great pleasure that he continues service to the IGU as Past President for another four years. He called on all to continue working together for our common interests as geographers, and find the way through the world of diversity, unpredictability, disasters and fascination.

### **Report of the Secretary General and Treasurer on the Period 2016-2020**

Secretary-General and Treasurer R.B Singh presented his report to the VGA. Singh welcomed EC Members, Chairs or Representatives of National Committees, Chairs or Representatives of Commissions and Task Forces and fellow geographers to the VGA. Singh highlighted EC meetings conducted during 2016-2020 period and presented EC member election results for the period 2018-2020 and 2020-2024. He then summarised the diverse range of activities that had been undertaken by members of the Executive Committee and appraised the General Assembly of EC members' various liaison responsibilities for Commissions, Task Forces and Countries.

Singh noted that the IGU GA had approved (by e-ballot) the technical amendment to the Statutes arising from the merger of ICSU and the ISSC and confirmed that English and French versions of the revised Statutes have been placed on IGU website.

The IGU Commission Excellence Award had been given to the following Commissions since 2016: Biogeography and Biodiversity (2019), Urban Challenges in a Complex World (2018), Tourism, Leisure and Global Change (2017), Mediterranean Basin (2016).

IGU has established sound relationships with other international organisations and continues to develop these. Singh represented IGU at the World Cultural Forum in Macau held under the auspices of ISSC and CIPSH in the year 2016. Singh noted that IGU had joined the International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences (CIPSH) in 2015. Several IGU executive members attended the EUGEO conference in Brussels, Belgium (September 2017). A joint IGU-EUGEO event at the Istanbul Congress 2021 is already planned. Collaboration with ISC, CODATA, UN GGIM, and GeoUnions is gradually being strengthened. IGU is consistently engaged in promoting the activities of other relevant bodies, such as IYGU and Future Earth, within its various Commissions.

***Report of IGU Regional Conference, August 6 to 10, 2018, Quebec, Canada:*** The program for this conference included 196 sessions, 1200 oral presentations, 82 poster presentations, and 9 field excursions in Quebec City and Charlevoix region. Participants came from over 100 countries, the majority from North America, followed by Asia (China, Japan), Europe

(France, United Kingdom, Poland, Germany, Russia), and South America (Brazil). Approximately 67% of the participants were from outside Canada, making this an ideal opportunity for Canadians to develop important relations with geographers from around the world. Nearly one-fourth of participants (23 %) were graduate students. The success of the 2018 IGU-CAG-NCGE Congress, along with the iGeo, is thanks to the close collaboration developed between the Canadian Association of Geographers, the Université Laval, and the Quebec City Convention Centre. The IGU Young and Early Career Geographers' Taskforce (IGU-YECG) organised a series of activities at the 2018 International Geographical Union (IGU) Regional Conference. Dr. Komali Yenneti, Chair of IGU-YECG, coordinated the task force events in Québec. Several Other Commissions, such as Biogeography and Biodiversity and the Urban Commission had also organised training programmes. IGU administered the usual travel grant to assist around 20 geographers to attend the Québec regional conference.

**Night of Geography, April 2019:** The Night of Geography (*La Nuit de Géographie*) was celebrated on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2019. Although the event coincided with the American Association of Geographers' annual conference, Night of Geography events took place in 14 countries, including France, Spain, Portugal, Bulgaria, Greece, Lithuania, Croatia, and Ireland and New Zealand. In Africa, six countries were involved, in collaboration with the association "CartONG", based in Chambéry (France). In addition, the "Missing Map" event was paired with GeoNight events, allowing worldwide exposure. Lemarchand is coordinating this programme. The MoU between IGU and the annual Festival of Geography (FIG) has been formally signed.

**IGU Dissemination Activities:** A key duty of the IGU Secretary-General is to act as a hub and conduit for communications and dissemination. This manifests in several different ways, *viz.* through the biannual publication of the *IGU Bulletin*. Copies of *IGU Bulletin* Volume 65-66 (for the years 2015 and 2016) were circulated at the 2018 Québec Regional Conference. Other communications include the annual report, the quarterly IGU e-Newsletter (courtesy of former Vice-President Prof. Giuliano Bellezza), and the IGU website <https://igu-online.org/> (Dr. Pankaj Kumar) which is now partly available in French and Spanish versions. The IGU Archives and IGU Centennial Publication are being taken care of by Dr. Bruno Schelhaas and Prof. Vladimir Kolosov respectively. Gönençgil recently tabled a proposal for the establishment of an International Day of Geography to the EC.

**IGU Publications:** Singh highlighted a number of Springer book series with strong geographical relevance, including a newly proposed series on the Sustainable Development Goals (series editors Singh, Mal and Meadows); the existing World Regional Geography Series (series editor de Mulder); and Advances in Geographical and Environmental Sciences (series editor Singh). Singh also mentioned that the Springer series entitled: Advances in Geographical and Environmental Sciences has now reached more than ten volumes, most generated from IGU Commissions. The first volume of the new Springer Series on *World Regional Geography (The Netherlands and the Dutch*, edited by de Mulder, de Pater and Droogleever-Fortuijn) has also now been published; this also bears the IGU logo. IGU signed a contract with Springer for the Centennial publication and, for a fee, the book can be made Open Access. An expression of interest has been received from the MDPI to establish a publishing partnership between the IGU and MDPI. Vice-President Iain Hay noted that IGU has a new book series with Edward Elgar Publishing entitled *International Geographical Union Series on Contemporary Geographies*- Series Ed: Iain Hay and Mike Meadows. Three books in this series are due out soon: the first on Cosmopolitanism; the second entitled Geographies of Misinformation; and the third on Applications of Big Data in Geography. The series has also had expressions to prepare one book on Environmental

problems and Issues in Africa and another on the French speaking geography of retail trade, commerce and consumption. Hay also mentioned the relaunch of LinkedIn account of IGU and encouraged members to join it to further enhance communications across the IGU.

**Future Collaboration:** Secretary-General Singh invited Commission Chairs to collaborate with the International Science Council (ISC) on important ISC core projects: 1. Future Earth Initiative; 2. Integrated Research on Disaster Reduction (IRDR); 3. Urban Health and Wellbeing; 4. GeoUnion Committee on Risk and Disaster Management. Singh suggested that geographers need to contribute to appropriate international initiatives through analyzing local, regional and national patterns of resources, disaster risk reduction and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) using spatial decision support systems.

**Ongoing and Future Tasks:** Secretary-General Singh highlighted a number of ongoing and future tasks including publication of the IGU *Bulletin*. Other tasks include encouraging Chairs of Commissions and Task Forces to increase the representation of women and those from the Global South in Steering Committees and encouraging Commissions and Task Forces to develop joint activities and projects

### Financial report for the period 2016-2019

Professor Meadows, as Assistant Secretary-General and Treasurer, reported briefly on the IGU financial situation. Given the online nature of the General Assembly, it was not possible to appoint the usual financial subcommittee to scrutinise the financial report and this was held over until the next General Assembly which will be held in association with the postponed International Geographical Congress in Istanbul in August 2021. Meadows noted that the financial situation of the IGU remains reasonably sound; expenditure on IGU Executive Committee matters has fallen, and it is anticipated that the situation for 2020 will show further reductions in expenditure due to COVID-19 travel restrictions that have precluded any face to face meetings during 2020.

Table 1 below summarises income and expenditure, highlighting EC expenses and grants awarded for the years 2016 to 2019; Table 2 presents balances in the three IGU accounts held at Standard Bank of South Africa Ltd (Claremont branch) as at 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2020 using current US\$ - ZAR exchange rate. Table 3 shows 2016 and 2020 balances on the IGU Promotion and Solidarity Fund (*de facto* the IGU endowment), held until recently in the USA under the custodianship of former IGU President Professor Ron Abler and recently transferred to Japan.

Table 1: IGU Accounts summary as at 21<sup>st</sup> August 2020

	Income	Expenses	Surplus/Deficit	EC expenses	Grants
<b>2016</b>	144332,02	143689,00	643,02	24387,00	85911,83
<b>2017</b>	177272,22	139493,79	37778,43	41586,97	75360,31
<b>2018</b>	130288,59	127334,43	2954,16	39805,68	71342,17
<b>2019</b>	137539,16	87926,29	49612,87	20912,70	49272,44

Amounts in US\$

Table 2: IGU Account balances, Standard Bank, Cape Town, as at 21<sup>st</sup> August 2020.

	US\$
<b>Current</b>	43264,77
<b>Market Link</b>	102,97
<b>Money Market</b>	145140,93
<b>Total</b>	188508,67

Table 3: IGU Promotion and Solidarity Fund, as at 21<sup>st</sup> August 2020.

2016	2020
70953,54	100968,30

### **Discussion of IGU Priorities, Commission Initiatives, etc.**

Vice-President Bojie Fu presented his view on “Geography: Fighting against COVID-19 for Sustainability”. Academician Fu discussed the global spread of COVID -19 and how it is affecting Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) as COVID-19, reversing decades of progress on poverty, health care and education (The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020). Geography has an important role in fighting COVID-19 as GIS, with big data, provides geospatial information to help understand and manage COVID-19 across different scales. Geographical elements have close relationships with the diffusion of COVID-19. In Fu’s view China’s national emergency response appears to have delayed the growth and limited the size of the COVID-19 epidemic there, averting hundreds of thousands of cases by 19 February (day 50). Fu further highlighted the importance of a systematic approach through coordination, classification and collaboration to contain COVID-19 and suggested reframing the Sustainable Development Goals for the post-pandemic era in ways that focus on the key area of promoting geography for sustainability. As Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Geography and Sustainability* Academician Fu encouraged researchers to submit COVID-19 related manuscripts for publication.

President Himiyama asked General Assembly participants to share their views on Commission and Task Force initiatives. Past President Kolosov congratulated the new EC and President and observed that renewal is a good occasion to set new ambitions and targets for IGU. He noted that the EC has important traditional and vital areas of activity in which new and higher standards are continuously being developed. Kolosov suggested updating and implementing existing IGU strategies and reinvigorating existing flagship projects such as the International Year of Global Understanding and Sustainable Cities and integrating them within the activities of a larger number of commissions. Kolosov also suggested coordinated efforts to study the COVID pandemic as its spread and control depends on several geographical factors like climate, virus pathways, and population mobility. Joint coordinated projects can be linked with super programmes such as Future Earth. Kolosov urged the need to recast and continue the IGU’s ‘Night of Geography’ to make it a truly international event. He also expressed his support for the development of a proposal for an ‘International Day of Geography’ which will help increase the visibility of geography at a global level. First Vice-President Joos Droogleever-Fortuijn expressed thanks to the Geography Olympiad Task Force for its successful organisation of Olympiad events in Beijing, China (2016), Belgrade, Serbia (2017), Quebec City, Canada (2018), and Hong Kong (2019). She noted, with regret, that because of COVID-19, this year’s Olympiad could not be held. The Olympiad Task Force has also succeeded in increasing the number and representation of countries participating. Professor Benno Werlen, Chair of Commission on Global Understanding mentioned that the Commission wishes to continue the International Year of Global Understanding initiative and to transform it into the Science and Humanity Decade of Global Understanding.

## Forthcoming Meetings

### International Geographical Congress, 2021, Istanbul, Turkey

Vice-President Professor Barbaros Gönençgil, Chair of the Local Organizing Committee 34<sup>th</sup> IGC, İstanbul, tabled a report on arrangements made for the 2021 event given the enforced postponement IGC 2020. He drew the VGA's attention to the following revised dates:

IGC 2020 Postponement announced by e-bulletin	2 <sup>nd</sup> April 2020
“Save the New Date for IGC 2021” announced by e- bulletin	14 <sup>th</sup> April 2020
Call for Session Proposals for the IGC 2021 by e- bulletin	20 <sup>th</sup> April 2020
Session Proposal Form	14 new session proposals
New Session for COVID-19 (Special Session)	11 papers so far
(New) Abstract Submission Open (new)	2nd July 2020 to 11th January 2021

Gönençgil noted that the Congress organizing committee has brought forward to 2021 all accepted abstracts (2256) and registrations approved for IGC 2020. The breakdown of submissions is: Oral Abstracts: 1782, Poster Abstracts: 474. Participants who cannot attend IGC2021 may apply to have their registration fee refunded.

New important dates for IGC, Istanbul 2021 for participants are as follows:

Deadline for submission of abstract for oral papers and posters submission -	11 January 2021
Notification of acceptance (new abstracts) –	8 <sup>th</sup> February 2021
Authors' registration deadline –	5 <sup>th</sup> April 2021
Early bird registration –	5 <sup>th</sup> April 2021
Regular registration –	22 <sup>nd</sup> June – 20 <sup>th</sup> August 2021

### **Congress Date**

16-20<sup>th</sup> August 2021

İstanbul University – İstanbul

<https://www.igc2020.org> <https://www.igc2021.org>

Gönençgil also noted the postponement of the 2020 Geography Olympiad and observed that some 50 countries had sought to participate in iGEO 2020. The new dates for the iGEO 2021 are 10-16<sup>th</sup> August 2021.

In response to a query, Gönençgil answered that all registration fees received, abstracts accepted, travel grants awarded, and the conference programme already developed for this year will be carried over to 2021.

### Extraordinary International Geographical Congress, 2022, Paris, France

In her role as Co-Chair of the Extraordinary Geographical Congress, Paris, 2022, Vice-President Lemarchand tabled a report on preparations for the event. The Congress is being organised by the French National Committee of Geography. The Institute of Geography within Sorbonne University will host the Congress. La Société de Géographie which will host a 'Year of Geography' festival, commencing in December 2021 and ending with a 'Festival of Geography' celebration in 2022. This will commemorate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the organization, which is the oldest geographical society in the world. The IGU Centennial

Congress 2022, Paris, will be the main event within the 'Year of Geography' celebration. The National Library of France will also be an IGC partner and will organise an exhibition on 'Exploring the world in 19<sup>th</sup> Century' during the Congress. The Congress programme will include lectures from leading scientists, geographers, and scholars of other disciplines as well as from speakers from non-academic backgrounds. The Congress will also host cultural programmes, interdisciplinary roundtables, a geographical 'café' (conducted in English, French and Spanish) for PhD scholars and field trips around the city of Paris, its suburbs, and regions. Special academic sessions on topics such as Geography and Diplomacy in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Geography and Global Climate Change, and Publishing in Academic Journals will be part of the programme. Amid COVID pandemic limitations, the local organizing committee for the Extraordinary IGC 2022 in Paris is working to its best capacity to streamline all logistics, infrastructure and the Congress website.

Past-President Vladimir Kolosov advised the VGA that a centennial monograph entitled *A Geographical Century: Essays for the Century of the IGU* is being published by Springer. He noted that the monograph will include contributions from a range of leading human and physical geographers from all part of the world. It will consider the history and present condition of geography as an international science and will provide new critical analyses of different forms of geographical internationalism that emerged during 20<sup>th</sup> century. As general editor of the monograph, Kolosov also mentioned that the publication sheds lights on geopolitics of international geographical collaboration and concludes with a view on the prospects of geography as 21<sup>st</sup> century international science.

### **International Geographical Congress, Dublin, 2024, Ireland**

As Chair of the local organizing committee for the 35<sup>th</sup> International Geographical Congress (IGC) Dublin, Associate Professor Niamh Moore-Cherry, gave a brief report on preparations for the 2024 Congress. The Congress is being organized by the Geographical Society of Ireland with support from a large number of other organisations. The main venue is The Helix, situated on the campus of University of Dublin. This offers good infrastructural support for conducting meetings, networking spaces, accommodation facilities, and leisure amenities. Moore highlighted that Dublin is well connected with many major cities and communication hubs of the world. The IGC 2024 programme theme is 'Celebrating a World of Difference' while connecting natural sciences, humanities and social sciences; valuing and developing intercultural awareness and understanding; promoting intellectual diversity and holistic perspectives; and identifying and embracing the complex interconnections between people, place and natural environment. Organizations such as the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers), Regional Studies Association, *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, International Network for Learning and Teaching, and the Global Network on Financial Geography (FinGeo) are co-operating to organize joint workshops, lectures, thematic events, cross commission sessions, field trips, women in geography networking events, early career researchers forum/workshops, teachers networking events and so on. The Geography Olympiad is also being organized. Several scientific excursions are planned for both pre- and post-congress. Moore-Cherry looks forward to welcoming IGC participants in August 2024 in Dublin, Ireland. She also pointed out that further information and updates are available at the Congress website [www.igc2024dublin.org](http://www.igc2024dublin.org).

## **International Geographical Congress, 2028, Melbourne, Australia**

Associate Professor Ian Rutherford presented a brief report on preparations for IGC2028 which will take place between 9-14 July 2028 in Melbourne, Australia. The host organisations are the Institute of Australian Geographers (IAG) and the School of Geography at the University of Melbourne, along with support from universities across Australia and New Zealand, and especially the New Zealand Geographical Society. The theme of the congress is 'Making Geographical Connections'. Rutherford observed that the IGC 2028 in the Melbourne marks two significant anniversaries, the first being that it will be 40 years since the IGC was last held in the Southern Hemisphere (Sydney, 1988) and second being that the Congress will occur on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of IAG. The Congress venue will be the vast Melbourne Convention Exhibition Center. Rutherford also mentioned that the Local Organizing Committee has a significant amount of sponsorship, which will be used to support travel grants to participants from low income countries. He went on to apprise the VGA about the extent of low cost accommodation options available in the city and University colleges. IGC 2028 is organizing several field visits being organized pre- and post-Congress in and around Melbourne, across Australia, and outside Australia including prospective field visits to New Zealand, Tasmania, and Fiji. Rutherford thanked IGU for giving opportunity to host IGC Melbourne 2028 and welcomed everyone to the Congress.

### **Votes of Thanks to Outgoing Executive Committee Members**

Vice-President Elena dell'Agnese offered a vote of thanks to the two outgoing EC members, First Vice-President Joos Droogleever Fortuijn and Past President Vladimir Kolosov. She noted that it was an honour to present this vote of thanks to two pillars of the IGU on the occasion of the VGA. dell'Agnese briefly sketched out Joos Droogleever Fortuijn's extensive association with IGU mentioning that she had been member of the Steering Committee of the Gender Commission from 1992-2000 and then Commission Chair from 2000-2004. Droogleever Fortuijn was elected Vice-President of IGU from 2012-2016 and First Vice-President from 2016-2020. She has also served as webmaster for the Gender Commission. She has played key roles in managing important activities of IGU, including monitoring activities of the commissions, supporting involvement of young people and early career researchers and successfully promoting participation of women scholars and scholars from the global South in IGU's Commissions. dell'Agnese thanked Droogleever Fortuijn for her competence, inclusive attitude, dedication, and diligence and hoped that she will always remain involved in the activities of IGU. In extending a vote of thanks to Professor Vladimir Kolosov, Professor dell'Agnese highlighted Professor Kolosov's 30 years of association with the IGU. Kolosov became a member of the Commission on the World Political Map during 1991-1996. From 1996-2000, he was the Chair of the Commission of Political Geography. In the year 2008, he was elected IGU Vice-President and was First Vice-President during 2010-12. Kolosov served as IGU President during 2012-2016 and as Past President from 2016-2020. dell'Agnese extended the IGU's warm thanks to Kolosov for his immense services to IGU EC. President Himiyama also thanked Professors Droogleever Fortuijn and Kolosov for their dedicated service and expressed his hope that they will remain active in IGU. Droogleever Fortuijn and Kolosov thanked dell'Agnese for the vote of thanks and reiterated their ambitions to continue their active support for IGU in the future.

### **Comments by the President Elect & Vice-Presidents Elect**

IGU President Elect Professor Meadows extended his greetings to the assembly from Cape Town and thanked the National Committees for having the confidence and faith in him as

President of the IGU for the next four years. He noted how very important it is to promote the discipline during the pandemic and post-pandemic era. Meadows highlighted the ongoing need to focus on increasing the footprint of IGU, to make IGU even more international, and to be more accessible, especially to female geographers and those from developing countries. He expressed the wish to improve communication with the Commissions, Task Forces and National Committees in the next few years. He then expressed his appreciation to IGU Commissions for their highly effective work in the past and his hope that they will continue to work more effectively over the coming years. He commented on the extraordinary privilege of working closely with Joos Droogleever Fortuijn and Vladimir Kolosov as EC members and paid tribute to them for the quality and calibre of their work, as well as their friendliness. Meadows also offered appropriate expressions of appreciation to President Yukio Himiyama for his excellent efforts, dedicated work, leadership quality and vision invested over the last four years, in particular in his efforts to connect IGU with International Organisations. He further expressed the hope to meet everyone face to face in Istanbul and to share new ideas to take the organisation forward. Vice-President Holly Barcus extended greetings from Minnesota, USA. Barcus expressed thanks to individuals, national committees and Commissions and Task Forces for supporting her nomination to the EC post. She commented that it is an honour to be part of the IGU EC and is looking forward to working and supporting its goals and activities. Vice-President Céline Rozenblat also noted that it is a great honour to be elected to the IGU EC and that it is her wish to emulate all the work done previously with her modest contribution and experience gained working with the IGU Urban Commission. She hopes to be able to contribute to the flagship programmes of IGU, to develop interaction with IGU National Committees and to liaise with IGU Commissions and Task Forces as appropriate.

### **Other Business**

President Himiyama asked VGA participants to share their views regarding IGU activities. Remarks were received from Professor Cosimo Palagiano and Peter Jordon.

### **Votes of Thanks**

President Himiyama offered his appreciation to Professor Gönençgil, for hosting of the IGU's first VGA and for his enormous contributions and technical support. He also extended heartfelt thanks to IGU Secretariat members Professor RB Singh and Dr Pankaj Kumar for their contributions in organising the VGA. Himiyama added that, while online meetings present some challenges, they also offer opportunities to attend high level meetings without any financial liabilities. In his view, an important function of the IGU EC is to provide an effective link between the internal and external IGU communities. It is hoped that even closer ties with the Commissions and Task Force and National Committees will be developed. As community, we can do much better in contributing to international activities such as the UN SDGs and COVID-19. Therefore, the online meeting era can be seen a good start in this regard. Himiyama expressed his thanks to all participants of the VGA and to those who had joined the meeting through YouTube. Secretary-General Singh thanked President Himiyama for conducting the VGA session very well.

### **Adjourn**

President Himiyama closed the VGA meeting at 10.30 GMT on Friday 21st August 2020.