



UNION GEODESIQUE ET GEOPHYSIQUE INTERNATIONALE
INTERNATIONAL UNION OF GEODESY AND GEOPHYSICS

The IUGG Electronic Journal

Volume 8 No. 6 (1st June 2008)

This short, informal newsletter is intended to keep IUGG Member National Committees informed about the activities of the IUGG Associations, and actions of the IUGG Secretariat. Past issues are posted on the IUGG Web site (<http://www.iugg.org/publications/ejournals/>). Please forward this message to those who will benefit from the information. Your comments are welcome.

Contents

1. Editorial: Recent natural disasters in China and in Myanmar.
2. The German Research Foundation's support to the IUGG Secretariat.
3. IUGG Executive Committee meeting and Conference "Earth Science for Society".
4. News from the International Council for Science (ICSU).
5. Free U.S. NAS reports for individuals from less affluent countries.
6. World Centres of Excellence on Landslide Risk Reduction.
7. Honors and awards.
8. IUGG-related meetings occurring during June – August 2008.

1. Editorial: Recent natural disasters in China and in Myanmar

The strong *cyclone Nargis* caused the deadliest natural disaster in the recorded history of Myanmar. The cyclone made landfall in the country on 2 May causing catastrophic destruction and at least 90,000 fatalities (damage is estimated at over US\$ 10 billion). Ten days later, a large earthquake, known now as the M=7.9 *Sichuan (Wenchuan) earthquake*, hit the central China. Official figures (as of 30 May) state that 68,858 are confirmed dead and 366,586 injured, with 18,618 listed as missing. The earthquake left about 4.8 million people homeless. Dozens of major aftershocks, ranging in magnitude from 4.4 to 6.0, were recorded within 72 hours of the main shock and are still recorded.

Our hearts go out to those in China and in Myanmar who have suffered losses of loved ones and personal property in the geophysical disasters of the past weeks. Dr. Tom Beer (IUGG President) and Dr. Alik Ismail-Zadeh (IUGG Secretary General) expressed their deep condolences for those caught in this tragedy.

The IUGG Commission on Geophysical Risk and Sustainability (GeoRisk Commission) as well as IASPEI and other Union Associations are actively concerned with problems of natural hazards and risks. Below are immediate responses of IUGG experts on the disasters.

Kuni Takeuchi (President, GeoRisk Commission; Japan): “I would like to emphasize the importance of national governments role in early warning and international collaboration in emergency response. I would mention the remarkable reduction of death tolls shown by Bangladesh and China in the latest history. In 1991 Bangladesh storm surge took 140,000 lives and in 2007 some 3,000. In 1931 the Great Yangtze floods in China took over 145,000 lives, and in 1954 about 33,000 and in 1998 about 1,300. Science and society can do the best to reduce the death tolls. In that sense, all natural disasters are to large extent man-made disasters”.

Ramesh Singh (Vice-President, GeoRisk Commission; India): “In most recent past so many disasters took place globally, e.g. deadly Cyclone in Maynamar and M7.9 Earthquake in Chengdu, Dust storm in Indo-Gangetic plains and Tornado in USA affecting human life. The biggest problem is that we do not have coordinated effort, and when we face such disasters then only we start bothering ...”

Vladimir Kossobokov (Vice-President, GeoRisk Commission; Russia): “Thousands of lives lost are the result of evident failure of traditional Probabilistic Seismic Hazard Assessments ... The new more adequate approaches based on pattern recognition, multi-scale analysis, and neo-deterministic seismic hazard modelling that account for fractal nature of earthquake distributions in space and time are available although confronted by traditionalists. We have to revolutionize the situation.”

Zhonglian Wu (IASPEI President; China): “The methods and results of the forecast of strong aftershocks are of a great importance now, especially in the regions where landslides and flooding pose a threats”.

2. The German Research Foundation’s support to the IUGG Secretariat

As a response to the request of the German National Committee for Geodesy and Geophysics (NKG), the German Research Foundation (DFG) awarded the IUGG Secretariat a grant to hire an Assistant Secretary General and to assist with business travel of the Secretary General for the years 2008-2009. The IUGG is very grateful to the NKG for the support and to the DFG for the sponsorship of the IUGG Secretariat.

3. IUGG Executive Committee meetings and Conference "Earth Science for Society"

The IUGG Executive Committee meeting will be held in Karlsruhe on 5-6 August. The Center on Climate and Environment of the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology will be formally established on the occasion of the IUGG Executive Committee meeting. To inaugurate the Center, the Conference "Earth Science for Society" will be held on 4 August and will highlight achievements of German geosciences. The Program of the Conference can be downloaded from the IUGG web-site: http://www.iugg.org/conf_ka_080804.pdf

4. News from the International Council for Science (ICSU)

ICSU Grant Awards

ICSU awarded two proposals supported by IUGG.

The project proposal “Fluid Mechanics and Geophysics of Environmental Hazards” submitted by the International Union of Theoretical and Applied Mechanics (IUTAM) has been awarded EUR 30,000. The IUGG Commission on Geophysical Risk and Sustainability will contribute to this project.

The project proposal “Mapping GeoUnions to the ICSU Framework for Sustainable Health and Wellbeing”, submitted by the International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ISPRS) and supported by several ICSU GeoUnions including IUGG, has been awarded EUR 30,000. The International Association of Volcanology and Chemistry of the Earth’s Interior (IAVCEI) and the International Association of Hydrological Sciences (IAHS) will coordinate IUGG’s contribution to the project.

ICSU-TWAS-UNESCO-UNU/IAS Visiting Scientist Programme

The programme supports visits of internationally renowned scientists to institutions located in developing countries, especially those located in the least developed countries. The objective of the programme is to provide institutions and research groups in developing countries, especially those with limited outside contacts, with the opportunity to establish long-term links with world leaders in science and so help develop capacity-building in their country. Under the programme, prospective host institutions can invite internationally renowned experts in areas of science other than mathematics and physics to collaborate in research and training. The visiting scientist will be expected to interact closely with faculty and students of the host institution with the aim of strengthening its existing activities and/or assisting in the establishment of new lines of research. The visiting scientist could also deliver lectures and seminars to research students, supervise students, conduct research and discuss future collaborative partnerships. For details on the programme, please visit the web-page <http://www.twas.org> (or e-mail: exchanges@twas.org)

New Strategic Plan of the International Council for Scientific and Technical Information (ICSTI)

In 2004, ICSU published a Priority Area Assessment of Scientific Data and Information, which recommended that the ICSU policy Committee on the Dissemination of Scientific Information (CDSI) be disbanded. This was subsequently approved at the ICSU General Assembly. Part of the rationale for this recommendation was that ICSTI should be able to replace much of the function of CDSI if it established closer links with academia and the ICSU Unions in particular. Several ICSU Unions are members of ICSTI. Over the past year, ICSTI has been developing its Strategic Plan and is now keen to engage the Unions in implementing this.

Contributed by C. Smith, Deputy Executive Director, ICSU

5. Free U.S. NAS reports for individuals from less affluent countries

The National Academy of Sciences of the United States (the IUGG Adhering Organization) announced a new program, which allows individuals from less affluent countries to download free PDFs of all Academy reports <http://www.nap.edu/>. Once the desired book has been selected on the NAP website, free PDF books will have a "SIGN IN" link at the bottom of the "purchase options" box. The user has to click on this link, complete a short survey, and then can download the book. Detailed information about which countries are eligible and how the process works is available at the following link: http://www.nap.edu/info/faq_dc_pdf.html. Note that the user's computer must have an IP address in one of the eligible countries.

Contributed by E. Szein, International Affairs Officer, The National Academies

6. World Centres of Excellence on Landslide Risk Reduction

The 2006 Tokyo Action Plan of the International Consortium on Landslides (ICL) proposed to set up World Centres of Excellence (WCoE) on Landslide Risk Reduction as follows: "The Global Promotion Committee (GPC) of the International Programme on Landslides (IPL) will identify and promote WCoEs every 3 years within eligible organizations, such as universities, institutes, NGOs, government ministries and local governments, contributing to "Risk Reduction for Landslides and Related Earth System Disasters". Linkages to WCoEs at the national level will be used to promote cooperation with ICL and dissemination of knowledge and information. An independent Panel of Experts, set up by the Global Promotion Committee of International Programme on Landslides (IPL-GPC), may be appointed to endorse the WCoEs. The objectives of WCoE are: (i) to strengthen the International Programme on Landslides (IPL) and IPL Global Promotion Committee; (ii) to create "A Global Network of entities contributing to landslide risk reduction"; and (iii) to improve the global recognition of "Landslide Risk Reduction" and its social-economic relevance, and entities contributing to this field. More information is available from the Secretariat of the IPL Global Promotion Committee, UNITWIN Headquarter Building, Kyoto University Uji Campus, Uji, Kyoto 611-0011, Japan. E-mail wlf@iclhq.org; <http://iclhq.org>

Contributed by K. Sassa, ICL President

7. Honors and awards

UNESCO, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), and the International Association of Hydrological Sciences (IAHS) jointly award annually the International Hydrology Prize to a person who has made an outstanding contribution to hydrology such as confers on the candidate universal recognition of his or her international stature. For 2008 the Prize has been awarded to **Jean MARGAT** (France) for his achievements throughout an outstanding career. The presentation of the Prize will take place on 10 June at UNESCO Headquarters during a session of the Intergovernmental Council of UNESCO - International Hydrological Program.

Every year the IAHS Tison Award is granted to a young scientist (under 41) for an outstanding paper published by IAHS. The 2008 Tison Award goes to **Gregor LAAHA** (Austria) for his paper "A national low flow estimation procedure for Austria" co-authored by Günter Blöschl and published in Hydrological Sciences Journal in August 2007. The

presentation of the Award will take place on 7 June at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, at the end of the IXth Kovacs Colloquium.

Contributed by P. Hubert, IAHS Secretary General

8. IUGG-related meetings occurring during June – August 2008

A calendar of meetings of interest to IUGG disciplines (especially those organized by IUGG Associations) is posted on the IUGG web site [www.IUGG.org/calendar]. Specific information about these meetings can be found there. Individual Associations also list more meetings on their web sites appropriate to their disciplines.

- June 6-7, IAHS and UNESCO, Paris, France, IXth Kovacs Colloquium “River Basins: from hydrological science to water management”
- June 8-13, IASPEI, Saariselk, Finland, Seismix2008.
- June 9-18, IAGA, Golden, Colorado, USA XIIIth IAGA Workshop on Geomagnetic Instruments, Data Acquisition, and Processing.
- June 15-20, CMG, Longyearbyen on Spitsbergen, Norway 27th IUGG Conference on Mathematical Geophysics: Dynamics in Earth Systems: Flow, Fracture and Waves.
- June 16-20, AOGS, Busan, Korea, Annual General Meeting of the Asia Oceania Geosciences Society.
- June 22-28, IAGA, Prague, Czech Republic, 11th Castle Meeting on New Trends in Geomagnetism: Palaeo, Rock and Environmental Magnetism.
- June 23-27, IAG, Chania, Crete, Greece, International Symposium on "Gravity, Geoid and Earth Observation: GGEO 2008".
- June 24-28, IAHS, Kampala, Uganda, Intl Conference “Groundwater & Climate in Africa”.
- June 29 - July 5, IAMAS, International Ozone Commission, Tromsø, Norway, Quadrennial Ozone Symposium.
- July 7-11, IAMAS, Cancun, Mexico, International Conference on Clouds and Precipitation (ICCP).
- July 8-11, SCAR, IASC, WMO, St. Petersburg, Russia, SCAR/IASC IPY Open Science Conference: Polar Research: Arctic and Antarctic Perspectives in the International Polar Year.
- July 13-20, COSPAR Montreal, Canada, 37th COSPAR Scientific Assembly.
- July 18-22, GeoRisk Barcelona, Spain, Symposium “The Planet Earth”, Euroscience Open Forum.
- July 27-31, SEDI, Kunming, China, 2008 SEDI Symposium.
- July 29-August 1, AGU, Cairns, Australia, Western Pacific Geophysics Meeting.
- August 3-8, IAMAS, IRC Foz do Iguacu, Brazil, International Radiation Symposium (IRS2008): Current Problems in Atmospheric Radiation.
- August 4, IUGG, Karlsruhe, Germany, Conference "Earth Science for Society".

- August 6-14, IUGS, Oslo, Norway, 33rd International Geological Congress.
 - August 12-15, IGU, Tunis, Tunisia, 31st International Geographical Congress.
 - August 17-22, IAVCEI, Reykjavik, Iceland, IAVCEI 2008 General Assembly.
-

End of IUGG Electronic Journal Volume 8 Number 6 (June 1, 2008)

A.T. Ismail-Zadeh, Secretary General [<http://www.IUGG.org>]
E-mail: Alik.Ismail-Zadeh@gpi.uka.de Fax: +49 721 71173.

Note: Contributions to IUGG E-Journal are welcome from members of the IUGG family. Please send your contributions to Alik Ismail-Zadeh by e-mail (insert in Subject line: *contribution to E-Journal*). The contributions will be reviewed and may be shortened by the Editor.