



Union Internationale de Spéléologie

❖ Definition of UIS:

The acronym UIS stands for the Union Internationale de Spéléologie, in the original French. Although the name may be written differently in other languages, the original acronym is maintained.

The UIS is a non-profit, non-governmental organization which promotes the development of interaction between academic and technical speleologists of a wide range of nationalities to develop and coordinate international speleology in all of its scientific, technical, cultural and economic aspects.

❖ History:

Speleology only took its first steps towards recognition as a science when techniques developed at the end of the 19th century. In the mid-1900's, the international speleological community, mostly Europeans, had the idea of holding international speleological congresses. In a meeting on August 22-23, 1949, in Valence, France, the decision was taken to hold the first in Paris, France, in 1953. Since then, International Speleological Congresses have been held in Italy (Bari, 1958), Austria (Vienna, 1961), Yugoslavia (Postojna, 1965), Germany (Stuttgart, 1969), Czechoslovakia (Olomouc, 1973), Great Britain (Sheffield, 1977), United States (Bowling Green, 1981), Spain (Barcelona, 1986), Hungary (Budapest, 1989), China (Beijing, 1993), Switzerland (La Chaux-des-Fonds, 1997) Brazil (Brasilia, 2001), and Greece (Athens-Kalamos, 2005). The next will be in United States (Kerrville, 2009 - <http://www.ics2009.us>)

The initiative of some of the speleologists at the 1965 congress led to the proposal for the creation of an international entity to unite speleologists from around the world and coordinate their speleological activities. The UIS was then founded on September 16, 1965, during the closing session in the Festival Room of Postojna Cave during the 4th International Congress of Speleology. The first statutes were approved, and the first board of officers elected: Bernard Gezè (France) as president, Gordon T. Warwik (England) as Vice-President, Stjepan Mikulec (Yugoslavia) as second Vice-President, and Albert Anavy (Lebanon) as General Secretary. The internal regulations were approved in 1969, and the latest alteration in the statutes was made in 1997.

❖ Structure:

At present, the UIS is presided over by the following officers: a president, two vice presidents, a general secretary, and eight adjunct secretaries (the number is defined by the General Assembly). Each must be from a different country. These officers are elected at the General Assemblies held during the International Congresses. The board includes an Advisory Council, consisting of the ex-presidents and other past officers.

To coordinate the technical and scientific development of international speleology, the UIS created various departments, each composed of Commissions and Working Groups, each of which has its own individual president and members. These groups work independently, organize their own meetings, develop projects, interact with other institutions, often publish their own bulletins, and may maintain web-sites. Their presidents, however, are elected at a General Assembly held during an International Congress of Speleology and they report on their activities at that time. At present, the UIS has the following Departments, Commissions, and Working Groups:

Department of Protection and Management

Commission on Protection, Management and Tourism in Caves and Karst Regions

Department of Scientific Research

Commission on Physical Chemistry and Hydrogeology of Karst

Commission on Paleokarst and Speleochronology

Commission on Glacial Caves and Karst in Polar Regions

Commission on Volcanic Caves

Commission on Karst Hydrogeology and Speleogenesis

Commission on Pseudokarst

Commission on Archaeology and Paleontology in Caves

Commission on Artificial Cavities

Commission on Mineralogy of Caves

Working Group on the Protection and Conservation of Speleothems

Working Group on Minerals Bibliography

Working Group on the Genesis of Minerals

Permanent Commission on Speleotherapy

Working Group on Hydrothermal Karst

Department of Documentation

Bibliographic Commission

Commission on Large Cavities

Commission of the Atlas of Karst Regions

Commission on the History of Speleology

Informatics Commission

Working Group on Topographical Symbols for Surface Karst Formations

Working Group: Speleological Dictionary

Working Group: Format for the Exchange of Speleological Information

Department of Exploration

Commission on Cave Rescue

Commission on Materials and Techniques

Commission on Cave Diving

Department of Education and Instruction

Commission on Speleological Education

The number of Commissions and Working Groups is not fixed, and new ones can be created or old ones eliminated if necessary. Working Groups are created for a specific period of time, whereas the Commissions are permanent as long as they have activities. The creation of a Commission or Working Group is always the result of the initiative of some scientist or technician in that area. Interested parties have only to contact the commission President and request that their names be included so they can participate in meetings, discussions, seminars, and symposia.

In order to supervise the work of exploration and international expeditions, the UIS instituted a Code of Ethics. This code, although it does not have the force of law, provides ethical guidelines for

such activities to promote the development of speleology, increase our knowledge about international speleological heritage, and foster interactions between speleological communities.

To integrate the speleological activities of the member countries and among of who appreciate the speleology around the world, the UIS maintains a Documentation Center in La Chaux-des-Fonds, in Switzerland, via the Swiss Speleological Society. In the same spirit, UIS has developed the Multi-Lingual Dictionary of Speleology (at present with nine languages represented) and keeps up-to-date the International Speleological Calendar of events related to speleology around the world.

❖ **International Congress of speleology (ICS):**

To verify the “State of the Art” of world speleology, the UIS promotes the International Congress of Speleology (ICS) every four years. In these congresses, papers on the various facets of speleology are presented, including papers on scientific areas such as geology, hydrogeology, mineralogy, biology, climatology, archaeology, paleontology, geography, and therapy, as well as on technical work (exploration, survey, rescue, new techniques, documentation, etc.) and cultural themes (religion, art, music, painting, sculpture, and the collection of stamps and coins). In addition to the formal presentation of papers, these congresses schedule meetings of the various Commissions and Working Groups; opportunities are also provided for the exchange of ideas and participation in various cultural activities, such as social gatherings, competitions, and technical visits, as well as excursions before and after the congress to visit the karst and caves of the host country.

The political directions of the UIS depend largely on the officers; official policy is outlined during the annual meetings of the officers, as well as during the General Assemblies of UIS at the international congresses. The officers have administrative autonomy, but it is the General Assembly, consisting of all of the delegates of all of the member countries, which decides the direction of the UIS by their votes. It is during the General Assembly that the work of the previous four years is presented and voted on; this is also the time for the creation or extinction of Commissions and Working Groups, and the analysis of the financial situation of the UIS. This is also when new members are admitted, the statutes modified, and new documents approved; moreover, new agreements are made and signed. The new officers and adjunct secretaries are also elected for the coming four-year period, and the host country for the next congress is chosen.

❖ **Present Situation:**

At present, the UIS has more than 60 member countries, located on all the continents of the world, and is open to the affiliation of all national associations and federations. The majority of the commissions are active and provide a copious scientific production; the UIS also publishes the IJS - International Journal of Speleology (via the Società Speleologica Italiana; the volume 35-1 is the last one printed) and the UIS Bulletin (for the dissemination of news from the Secretary General); the Bibliographic Commission also publishes Speleological Abstracts, an annual bibliographic listing of speleological literature (the last volume is 42-43, which was printed in 2005). UIS also maintains a website containing information about speleological contacts around the world. This website provides access to the UIS Statutes, the Internal Regulations, Code of Ethics, issues of the UIS Bulletin, the Multi-Lingual Speleological Dictionary, the calendar of coming speleo events, a list of member countries, a list of the addresses of the officers of all the internal organizations, a list of the national delegates, and a list of the Commissions and Working Groups, as well as many links with the websites of all the national organizations of most countries. The web address of the UIS is:

<http://www.uis-speleo.org>. Since July 20, 2002, the UIS has had a fixed address: Titov trg 2, Postojna, Slovenia, in space provided by the government via the Institute of Karst Research of the Slovenian Academy of Arts and Sciences. The present officers, elected at the last general assembly in August, 2005, in Athens-Kalamos, in Greece, for the 4-year period from 2005 – 2009 are as follows:

President:

Andrew James EAVIS (England) – cavis@windcrown.co.uk

Vice presidents:

Alexander Klimchouk (Ukraine) – klim@klim.carrier.kiev.ua

Pavel BOSAK (Czech Republic) – bosak@gli.cas.cz

General Secretary:

Fadi NADER (Lebanon) – fn05@aub.edu.lb

Adjunct Secretaries:

Andrej MIHEVC (Slovenia) – andrej.muhevc@guest.arnes.si

Carlos BENEDETTO (Argentina) - benedetto@rucared.com.ar

Efraim MERCATO (Porto Rico) - emercato@caribe.net

George VENI (USA) – gveni@satx.rr.com

Kyung Sik WOO (South Korea) - wooks@kangwon.ac.kr

Paul WILLIAMS (New Zealand) - p.williams@auckland.ac.nz

Roman HAPKA (Switzerland) – roman.hapka@bluewin.ch

Stein-Erik LAURITZEN (Norway) - stein.lauritzen@geo.uib.no

❖ Invitation:

If you are a speleologist, whether a scientist or an explorer, or simply someone who likes speleology, enter into contact with the UIS and have your speleological group contact the national federation or society of your country. Encourage your group to join the UIS, and encourage your national association or federation to become a member of the UIS so it can select a delegate and vote at the general assembly. Help the UIS grow and create a truly international speleology, whether developing new techniques, exploring new caves, studying new theories, practicing rational speleological tourism, preserving the natural heritage, publishing information, or encouraging sustainable development. Enjoy speleology in your own way, but participate. Don't wait to see what the UIS can do for you, but rather see what you can do to help develop speleology. Continue to enjoy speleology in the place and way you always have, but share what you do with the rest of the international community.

Monte Sião/Brazil, April 2006

José Ayrton Labegalini
UIS Past-President