

First Session, July 23, 2017
Penrith (Panthers Event Centre), Sydney – AUSTRALIA

The First Session of the General Assembly of the 17th International Congress of Speleology started at 10:36 on Sunday July 23rd, 2017. It took place in the Panthers Event Centre in Penrith (Sydney, AUSTRALIA).

Prof. Kyung Sik Woo welcomed the participants to the General Assembly of the 17th International Congress of Speleology. Soon after, he declared the General Assembly open and asked the participants to observe a moment of silence for all cavers and scientists who contributed to the UIS and left the international community in between congresses (Alfredo Bini [I], Rajko Bracic [Si], Yaroslav Chonka [Ua], Gyorgy Denes [H], Trevor Ford [Aus], Ivan Gams [Si], Ken Grimes [Aus], Elery Hamilton-Smith [Aus], Steve Hudson [US], Sami Karkabi [Lb], Ted Lane [Aus], Michel Letrone [F], Osvaldo Martinez [Ar], Charlie Self [UK], Nicholas Sullivan [US], Hubert Trimmel [A], and Norman Veve [Pr]).

Twenty-eight (28) member-countries (from 54) were registered at the first session of the General Assembly: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Korea, Lebanon, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Poland, Puerto Rico, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America.

Prof. Woo, thanked the organizers of the 17th ICS and the Australian Speleological Federation (ASF) for all the difficulties surmounted during the four previous years. He invited Mr. Denis Marsh President of the 17th ICS to welcome the audience. Mr. Denis Marsh thanked the delegates for coming to Sydney and made a few introductory statements.

The convened General Assembly unanimously approved the minutes of the last sessions of the General Assembly that took place at the 16th ICS in Brno, Czech Republic in July 2017. The General Assembly also approved the proposed agenda for the 2017 sessions.

Mr. Arjan Van Waardenburg (voting delegate of The Netherlands) proposed to add in the minutes of the 16th ICS General Assembly: "The assembly accepted the three proposals and asked the board to report on them", in reference to the requests made by the French Federation of Speleology and Speleo Nederland in 2013.

In the above mentioned minutes, the following sentence was written: "The Advisory Committee also studied the requests made by the FFS and Speleo Nederland and suggested that the new UIS Bureau considers them seriously and proceed with convenient actions." Yet, the General Assembly did not accept the proposals. The Bureau had investigated them seriously and replied to Mr. Van Waardenburg, then reported about that after the annual Bureau Meeting in 2014 (as published in the meeting minutes in UIS Bulletin Volume 57).

This matter was explained to Mr. Van Waardenburg and the Delegate of The Netherlands. Mr. Van Waardenburg agreed to withdraw his proposal in the second session of the General Assembly 2017.

The President of the UIS, Prof. Woo presented the major updates regarding the UIS and the UN, especially the International Year of the Cave and Karst project proposed for 2021. The Secretary General of the UIS, Dr. Fadi Nader, presented his report illustrating the major achievements of the Union and its Bureau since the 16th ICS. He also briefly introduced the major achievements recorded by the international speleological community. Dr. Nadja Zupan Hajna, Acting Treasurer and Adjunct Secretary of the UIS, presented the financial status of the Union, which can be summarized by a healthy input/output and healthy financial status (UIS accounts on the 1st of July, 2017 consisted of about 49,900 USD and 29,000 Euros). Both reports of Dr. Fadi Nader and Dr. Nadja Zupan Hajna are published in the 2017 UIS

Bulletin (Vol. 59-2).

Afterward, representatives of following Departments, Commissions, and Working Groups presented verbal reports and information about their activities for the period of 2013-2017: Departments of Education and Karst and Cave Protection, Commissions of Archaeology and Paleontology, Artificial Cavities, Arts and Letters, Bibliography, Biology, Cave Diving, Cave Rescue, Glacier, Firn and Ice Caves, History of Speleology, Informatics, Karst Hydrogeology and Speleogenesis, Long, Deep and Large Caves, Microbiology, Paleokarst and Speleochronology, Physical Chemistry and Hydrogeology, Pseudokarst, Speleotherapy, Techniques and Materials, and Volcanic Caves, and the Cavers' Dictionary, Publications Exchange, and Survey and Mapping Working Groups. Some submitted their reports and arranged for UIS Vice President of Administration Dr. George Veni to read them.

The General Assembly elected two auditors unanimously: Andreas Wolf (Germany) and Gheorghe Ponta (Romania).

The General Assembly unanimously elected three adjudicators for the elections of the new UIS Bureau: Mr. Andy Eavis (UK), Mr. Arjan Van Waardenburg (The Netherlands), and Mr. Nicholas White (Australia), pending that none of them will have a candidate from their country.

A short but comprehensive presentation of the only candidate for the 18th Congress of Speleology (2021) was delivered by the representatives of the French Federation of Speleology (Laurence Tanguille and Gael Kaneko).

A Lunch break was requested by the President, Prof. Woo, at around 12:10 and the General Assembly re-convened at around 14:30.

The Secretary General Dr. Fadi Nader introduced official requests from Kyrgyzstan and the Philippines. Representatives of both countries were invited to introduce their requests.

- The Kyrgyzstan representative (Mr. Andrei Markov) addressed the General Assembly at 14:45, and his request was unanimously voted and accepted.
- Philippines representatives (Mr. Eric Bontuyan and Mr. Marc Mentens) addressed the General Assembly at 15:35, and their request was also unanimously voted and accepted.

Proposals from the floor were heard. Only Mr. Arjan Van Waardenburg had a question related to the Report of the Secretary General, asking to add a sentence on the matter pertaining to the request to have UIS listed in an international sports organization.

The proposed version of the modified UIS Statutes were published in the UIS Bulletin Volume 58-2 in 2016 and sent to all national delegates. Following suggestions submitted by the delegates for further modifications, a final version was printed and distributed to the Delegates at the beginning of this Session. Dr. Fadi Nader reminded the Delegates that they were informed about the proposed changes more than 6 months before the 17th ICS General Assembly. He invited the Delegates to check again this document and cast their final comments, if any, before voting. Mr. Friedhart Knolle (Delegate of Germany) proposed to make a modification to Article 3 (Purpose) by adding "lobby and promote" after "to develop" in the third line. A discussion followed and Mr. Knolle agreed to change his proposal by dropping the word "lobby" but keeping "and to promote" instead. Prof. Dr. Pavel Bosak, on the behalf of the Advisory Committee declared that the modified UIS statutes and Internal Regulations documents together with this last change proposed by Mr. Knolle are constitutional and can be voted on.

The 28 Delegates present at the General Assembly voted "yes" to the new UIS Statutes (unanimous vote).

Dr. Fadi Nader, explained to the General Assembly the background of the modifications on the Internal Regulations and pointed out that this document is the working document of the UIS structure, especially

for the UIS Bureau, that has only to be approved by the Assembly General without going into details of each article. Still, Article 7 pertains to membership fees which had considerable proposed modifications and needed specific consideration. So he asked for a vote on this Article specifically and generally on approving the new document as a whole. Of the present delegates at the time of vote, 24 voted "yes" and only one delegate voted no (Arjan Van Waardenburg, The Netherlands). The remaining three delegates were not present.

Nivaldo Colzato introduced the UIS Prizes for this ICS.

Prof. Woo thanked again all the participants and closed the first session of the General Assembly of the 17th ICS, at around 16:30 on Sunday July 23rd, 2017.

Second Session, July 29, 2017
Penrith (Panthers Event Centre), Sydney – AUSTRALIA

At the opening, a total of 37 member countries were registered: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Mexico, The Netherlands, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Puerto Rico, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America. Therefore, 37 delegates or their representative proxies could cast their votes.

The UIS President declared the second session of the General Assembly open, at around 09:20. Prof. Kyung Sik Woo invited the French delegates to present their proposal for organizing the 18th International Congress of Speleology in 2021 in Lyon (France) before asking the General Assembly to vote on their proposal. Voting followed and it was unanimous (37 votes) in favor of the French proposal.

The General Assembly then had to elect one Election Committee member to replace Nicholas White (Australia) because a candidate for the Bureau was nominated from his own country. Mr. Trevor Faulkner was elected with 35 votes (Pavel Bosak – Czech Republic abstained).

Prof. Woo, then, invited the representatives of the UIS Commissions to present their planned future activities for the period 2017-2021.

Following the approval of the new Statutes during the first session of the General Assembly, the Bureau reminded everyone that Departments and Working Groups no longer existed. Departments became Commissions and Working Groups needed to decide if they wished to become Commissions or stay within their Commissions as committees or some other title. All of the now-Commissions that reported during first session reported on their meetings during the previous week and plans for the next four years. The only significant change was the deactivation of the Microbiology Commission and include its activities within the Biology Commission. The reports and proposed actions were approved (by 34 votes; two delegates voted “No”). All Commissions will send their meeting reports to the Vice President of Administration in due time to be published in the UIS Bulletin.

Followed the report on proposals, motions and decisions. The ISCA-UIS MOU (document shared with delegates in the first session) was approved by the General Assembly (33 voted “YES”, 3 abstained). LICAS (Sri Lanka NGO) proposal to be UIS Cooperative Member was then approved by 36 votes (1 abstained). Support for the World Heritage Nomination of the Peruacu Valley in Brazil, proposed by Mr. Labegalini (Brazil) was approved by 36 votes (1 abstention). Finally, Mr Arjan Van Waardenburg withdrew his proposal for modifying the minutes of the previous 2013 General Assembly (see above), pledging to continue working for the benefits of cavers and UIS.

Two budget auditors, Andreas Wolf (Germany) and Gheorghe Ponta (Romania) after examining the books and relevant documents provided by the Acting Treasurer, presented the audit report and recommendations:

***Audit Report on the accounts of the Union Internationale de Spéléologie
for the period of August 2013 to July 1st 2017***

“The treasury was reviewed point by point for the last periode (2013-2017) by Mr. Andreas Wolf (Germany) and Mr. Gheorghe Ponta (Romania) in Sydney. The treasurer provides us to all questions full information.

We thank for excellent work from treasurer, Dr. Nadja Zupan, and recommend her discharge.”

Recommendations

- *The position of Treasurer of the UIS should be established and should not be given a set period*

of office – stability in this position is essential.

At this time the balance of the funds held by the UIS are 49,972.76 USD and 29,040.95 Euros.

Andreas Wolf (Germany) and Gheorghe Ponta (Romania) – the latter, Mr. Ponta could not sign the report due to health problems (he was in the hospital).

The auditors' report was accepted with 35 votes (2 delegates voted "No").

The major speleological events which will take place between 2017 and 2021, were listed and presented. The comprehensive list will also appear in the next UIS Bulletin and on the UIS website.

- 1) International Clean-up of Gouffre Berger, 1-15 August 2017 (Vercors, France), <http://cds39.fr/BFC/index>.
- 2) 11th Balkan Caving Camp, 28 August – 3 September 2017 (Leonidio, Greece), <https://archive.org/details/11thBalkanCaversCamp2017> or <https://www.facebook.com/11th-Balkan-Caving-Camp-2017-in-Leonidio-301383733616075/>
- 3) 11th EuroSpeleo Forum, 15-17 September 2017 (Ferrières, Belgium), <https://www.speleovvs.be/index.php/en/caving-days>
- 4) Biospeleology Conference, 21-23 September 2017 (Seville, Spain), <https://5encuentrossevilla.wixsite.com/veibs>
- 5) 44th International Association of Hydrogeologists Congress, 25-29 September 2017 (Dubrovnik, Croatia), <http://iah2017.org/>
- 6) National Cave and Karst Management Symposium, 16-20 October 2017 (Eureka Springs, Arkansas, USA), <http://www.nckms2017.com/>
- 7) British Cave Research Association 28th Cave Science Symposium, 20-21 October 2017 (Leeds, UK), website to be announced.
- 8) Geological Society of America Convention, 22-25 October (Seattle, -Washington, USA), http://www.geosociety.org/GSA/Events/Annual_Meeting/GSA/Events/gsa2017.aspx
- 9) International Conference on Geomorphology, 6-11 November 2017 (New Delhi, India), karst session, <http://www.icg2017.com/session.php>
- 10) Workshop: Grotte de Han, New Dramatic Effect of Lighting, 16-18 November 2017 (Han-sur-Lesse, Belgium), at@cavelighting.de.
- 11) To Know and Share Caves and Karsts: Understanding, Conservation, and Geotourism, 6-9 March 2018 (Ardèche, France), <https://dhuguet.wixsite.com/cavesymposium2018>
- 12) The Sinkhole Conference, joint with the 3rd Appalachian Karst Symposium, 2-6 April 2018 (Shepherdstown, West Virginia, USA), <http://www.sinkholeconference.com/>
- 13) EuroKarst 2018, 2-6 July 2018 (Besançon, France), <http://www.eurokarst.org/>
- 14) 18th International Vulcanospeleology Symposium, 21-27 July 2018 (Lava Beds National Monument, California, USA), <http://www.vulcanospeleology.org/sym18/ISV18.html>
- 15) EuroSpeleo Forum 2018, 23-26 August 2018 (Ebensee, Austria), <http://eurospeleo.at/expo.html>.
- 16) 24th International Conference on Subterranean Biology, 20-24 August 2018 (University of Aveiro, Portugal), <http://24icsb.web.ua.pt/>.

The elections of the New UIS Bureau were introduced by Mr. Andy Eavis who explained the procedure following the UIS Constitution (17 votes minimum for election in the first round). The two other adjudicators were: Mr. Arjan Van Waardenburg (The Netherlands) and Mr. Trevor Faulkner (UK).

Mr. Andy Eavis introduced the candidates:

UIS President

Mr. Zdeněk Motyčka (Czech Republic)

Dr. George Veni (USA)

UIS Vice President of Administration

Mr. Jean-Pierre Bartholeyns (Belgium)
UIS Vice President of Operations
Mr. Efrain Mercado (Puerto Rico)
UIS Secretary General
Dr. Fadi Nader (Lebanon)
UIS Treasurer
Prof. Nadja Zupan Hajna (Slovenia)
UIS Adjunct Secretaries
Nivaldo Colzato (Brazil)
Prof. Dr. Mladen Garašić (Croatia)
Bernard Chirol (France)
Satoshi Goto (Japan)
Gyula Hegedus (Hungary)
Dr. Tim Moulds (Australia)
Dr. Daniella Pani (Italy)
Prof. Mario Parise (Italy)
Bärbel Vogel (Germany).

The candidates were then individually invited by the head of the Election Comity – except Jean-Pierre Bartholeyns ahead of the election of the Vice President of Administration – to introduce themselves in front of the General Assembly before the election took place. Jean-Pierre Bartholeyns, having already completed two consecutive terms of Ajoint Secretary, had his last chance to be elected as VP-Administration to remain in the UIS Bureau.

The new UIS President, Dr. George Veni, was elected in the first round obtaining 19 votes (Mr. Motyčka obtained 18 votes). Mr. Motyčka proposed himself candidate for the position of the UIS Vice President of Administration. He was elected with 20 votes while Mr. Jean-Pierre Bartholeyns received 16 votes. Mr. Bartholeyns proposed himself as a candidate to the following position, UIS Vice President of Operations, where Mr. Efrain Mercado was elected with 29 votes (Mr. Bartholeyns received 8 votes). The UIS Secretary General, Dr. Fadi Nader, was re-elected with 35 votes (2 delegates left their ballots blank). The new UIS Treasurer, Dr. Nadja Hajna Zupan, was elected with 36 votes (and 1 blank ballot).

The UIS Adjunct Secretaries were elected in one round. Since there were two candidates from one country (Italy), Dr. Fadi Nader had asked the delegates to vote only for one candidate from Italy (since the Bureau cannot have two members from the same country according to UIS Statutes). The Election committee later found that this is not correct and that the voting should be for all candidates and the Italian candidate with the higher votes would be elected, if the candidate received at least 50% of the votes. The first vote was not counted and the first round repeated with following members were elected: Mr. Nivaldo Colzato of Brazil (33 votes); Prof. Dr. Mladen Garašić of Croatia (32 votes); Mr. Bernard Chirol of France (27 votes); Mr. Satoshi Goto of Japan (29 votes); Mr. Gyula Hegedus of Hungary (25 votes), Dr. Tim Moulds of Australia (28 votes); and Ms. Bärbel Vogel of Germany (29 votes). The unsuccessful candidates from the first round were the two Italian candidates (Dr. Daniel Pani, 16 votes; Prof. Mario Parise, 23 votes).

The Statement of the newly elected UIS President was presented by Dr. George Veni, following the elections. He thanked the audience and expressed his will to move forward with the new UIS Bureau and work hard for the Union. He thanked the members of the past Bureau.

Mrs. Kempe proposed that the Bureau to write a letter to thank the children who drew all the flags of the UIS Member countries which were displayed at the General Assembly and the Opening Ceremony of the ICS. This proposal was approved unanimously, and Nicholas White suggested himself to deliver the letter of the UIS. Mr. Efrain Mercado then proposed to the General Assembly to recognize the long-life achievements and work toward international speleology of Mr. Ángel Eusebio Graña González of the Cuban Speleological Society. 35 delegates voted yes to this proposal (one abstained).

Former UIS President, Prof. Kyung Sik Woo, addressed the Assembly and thanked the members of his Bureau. He distributed President's Certificates of acknowledgements and his own presents to all of them and to other Commissions leaders and individuals who helped tremendously the UIS. This was followed by a surprise to Kyung Sik Woo consisting of a certificate prepared for him and signed by the previous presidents.

Finally, the UIS Past-President in a short conclusive speech declared the Assembly General of the 17th ICS, as closed at 13:08. He invited everybody to join around the UIS Flag to complete the closing ceremony with giving the UIS Flag to the 18th ICS organizers.