

INTERNATIONAL GEOGRAPHICAL UNION COMMISSION: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT & MANAGEMENT OF KARST TERRAINS

- Dave Gillieson

The International Geographical Union is the premier world body for professional geographers and spatial scientists. It meets every four years and has a number of commissions which are aimed at fostering research and communication in different areas of geography. Membership is open to geographers and environmental scientists who adhere to the aims of the IGU and its commissions. The IGU has had a Karst Commission since 1956; the last commission held a meeting in Australia in 1988, and its new commission was formed late in 1996. My aim here is to provide some basic information about the IGU Karst Commission and to encourage involvement in its work. Several ACKMA members are past or present members of the IGU Karst Commission. We are currently planning a meeting here in Australia in 2002.

For the period 1996-2000 our specific aims are:

- To improve understanding of the relationships between humans and karst environments
- To develop appropriate theories and technologies for the rational and sustainable use of karst resources in the late 20th and early 21st centuries

To achieve these aims we have set ourselves the following objectives:

- ♦ To investigate the hydrological processes operating in karst areas;
- ♦ To investigate the early development of surface and underground landforms and hence their spatial location and to investigate further the influence of human activities on solutional erosion and landform evolution;

- ♦ To promote research on sediment dynamics in karst. Specifically, soil development and human-induced soil erosion on karst and sediment transport through the karst;
- ♦ To promote research on karst geo-ecology. Specifically more detailed investigations of the karst system from the surface vegetation/soils to subsurface features. Through this research we intend to make a distinctive contribution to land management and to the rational and sustainable use of resources in karst areas.

There is still a great deal of ignorance about the characteristics of karst geoecosystems amongst engineers, land managers, planners and politicians. To overcome this we intend to make the results of past research more readily available through the compilation and publication of two volumes, viz:

Problems of Karst Resource Management: A Global Perspective. Contributors from as many countries as possible will provide a brief summary of the main karst resources in their country; management problems and progress which has been made towards their solution.

Karst Resource Management: A Technical Manual. This will be produced by a small team and will draw together the best practice from different countries and the most up to date information on the dynamics of karst geoecosystems. UNESCO support will be sought and this will replace the volume "Saving caves - Towards an International Protection System for Karst Environments" which was proposed but not realized by the last karst commission.

The full members of the new commission are:

John Gunn (UK, Chairman), Ilona Barany-Kevei (Hungary), George Brook (USA), David Gillieson (Australia), Angel Gines (Spain), Alexander Klimchouk (Ukraine), Andre Kranjc (Slovenia), Javier Rodriguez-Rubio (Cuba, Vice-Chairman), Jean Salomon (France), Andrzej Tyc (Poland), and Kazuko Urushibara-Yoshino (Japan).

Note that the membership gives a reasonable geographical balance with representatives from Asia, Australasia, Central America, Europe and North America. Four of the European members are from countries in the former Soviet block. Our average age is 47!

The planned meetings of the commission are as follows:

1997 Slovenia. 1998 Portugal (with IGU biogeography commission). 1999 Indonesia (Java). 2000 Korea

The study of karst terrains has always been an interdisciplinary science and the new Commission intends to maintain existing contacts with geologists and speleologists and to develop contacts

with colleagues from other disciplines who share an interest in karst terrains, particularly ecologists. In particular links have already been established to these other international bodies:

IUS Karst hydrogeology. IGCP#379 Karst & global carbon cycle. IGU Biogeography commission. IAH Karst Commission.

I look forward to hearing from you and assisting you to become involved in the work of the IGU Karst Commission. My contact details are: Dr. David Gillieson, School of Geography & Oceanography, University College, UNSW

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