

Académie Royale de Belgique

Comité National Belge
de
GÉODESIE et de GÉOPHYSIQUE

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Vice-président : S. Dewitte
Secrétaire : C. Bruyninx
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Belgisch Nationaal Comité
voor
GÉODESIE en GÉOFYSICA

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<http://bncgg.oma.be>

Annual report 2013

Comité National Belge de Géodésie et de Géophysique *Belgisch Nationaal Comité voor Geodesie en Geofysica*

1. Short introduction on the subject of research and the goals of the Committee

The BNCGG serves as a link between IUGG and the Belgian scientists working in the fields of Geodesy and Geophysics. This activity reaches a climax every four years at the IUGG general assemblies. The BNCGG is then charged to propose to the Academy the national delegates to IUGG and to its eight Associations:

- International Association of Cryospheric Sciences (IACS);
- International Association of Geodesy (IAG);
- International Association of Geomagnetism and Aeronomy (IAGA);
- International Association of Meteorology and Atmospheric Sciences (IAMAS);
- International Association of Hydrological Sciences (IAHS);
- International Association of the Physical Sciences of the Ocean (IAPSO);
- International Association of Seismology and Physics of the Earth Interior (IASPEI);
- International Association of Volcanology and Chemistry of the Earth Interior (IAVCEI).

In the meantime the BNCGG organises regularly conferences by known Belgian or foreign scientists.

The BNCGG tries also to encourage the participation of young scientists to the IUGG General Assemblies by attributing grants.

Belgium was among the 9 countries who established the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics (IUGG) on July 28, 1919 in Brussels. The Belgian National Committee for Geodesy and Geophysics (BNCGG) was created shortly after in 1921. The running expenses were covered until 1950 by the National Cartographic Institute and later on by Royal Academy of Belgium, now split into "Koninklijke Vlaamse

Academie van België voor Wetenschappen en Kunsten" and "Académie Royale des Sciences, des Lettres et des Beaux-Arts de Belgique".

In parallel with the BNCGG there exists since 1955 an "Association sans buts lucratifs de droit belge" called "Comité National Belge de Géodésie et de Géophysique, Bruxelles". It is charged to administrate the finances of the Committee.

2. Member list

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3. Meetings of the Committee in 2013

Dates and main conclusions

The traditional annual BNCGG General Assembly has been held on January 24 in the Meridian room of the Royal Observatory of Belgium. The introductory conference was given by Pr. Jean-Louis Tison (ULB).

It has been necessary to organize a second General Assembly on May 3 to discuss the proposal done by the IUGG General Secretary to organize a celebration event of the IUGG centenary in Brussels in 2019. This second GA was held in the meeting room of the Royal Observatory of Belgium.

Another BNCGG meeting was organized on October 10 at the Royal Observatory of Belgium with two conferences by Pr. Pierre Ozer (ULg) and Dr. David Dehenauw (KMI/IRM).

The summary of the three talks that were given to the Committee follow:

Ice-Ocean interactions under the Roi Baudouin Ice Shelf, East Antarctica: controls on sea level rise

By Pr. Jean-Louis Tison, Université Libre de Bruxelles

On January 24, 2013 at ROB

One of the major uncertainties in the context of the surmised Global Climate Change is the future behaviour of the global sea level, with potentially severe impacts on human society, especially in coastal areas. One direct driver of expected future sea level rise is the contribution of melting/calving ice sheets, given the large amounts of frozen water stored in these large natural ice masses.

This talk will present recent results from glaciological and oceanographic measurements in the coastal vicinity (Princess Ragnhild Coast) of the new Belgian Antarctic Base Princess Elisabeth, aiming at quantifying the potential contribution of this part of East-Antarctica to accelerated ice discharges to the Southern Ocean. Indeed, until now, it has been considered that it is mainly some regions of West-Antarctica (e.g. Pine Island Glacier in the Amundsen Sea) that show clear signs of "destabilization" due to the fact that most of its ice-bedrock lies well below present-day sea level. Little is known, however, of its east Antarctic counterpart, generally reported as quite stable (or even in slight growth) in terms of mass balance. We will review the processes at stake, and see how these might be at work (or not) in the vicinity of the old "base Roi Baudouin" location (actually a floating ice shelf).

Communication and catastrophe: "everything's under control"

By Pr. Pierre Ozer, Department of Environmental Sciences and Management, University of Liege, Arlon

On October 10, 2013 at ROB

There are multiple ways to communicate when disaster strikes. But the common denominator is to run the signal that "everything is under control". Yet, people 'love' that. However, it sometimes –very often– happens that disasters are handled so as to serve its own interests at the expense of the public interest. In the context of this paper, we focus on natural disasters. We will travel across three continents to show the multitude of possible manipulations, the objectives of the latter and two common points between these three examples: the defense of some interests (financial or political) and the further impoverishment of the most vulnerable populations. The first example takes us to Vietnam where we will see how the country is affected by climate change. Then, in Benin, we will see how flooding can be whipped up in an election campaign. Finally, a Belgian example (floods in Tubize) will show that sometimes an improvised too reassuring communication can be disastrous on a political level.

Communication aspects of high impact weather: the Pukkelpop storm case

By Dr. David Dehenauw (KMI/IRM)

On October 10, 2013 at ROB

August 18, 2011, the biggest death toll in Belgium due to severe weather occurred since 1953 during the Pukkelpop festival in Kiewiet, near Hasselt. Was this forecast? Was this thunderstorm truly exceptional or not? Which warnings were issued? Did they reach the organisers of Pukkelpop? Why or why not? Are

there lessons to be learned? If yes, has action been taken already by all partners? Was the disaster an accident waiting to happen? I will try to answer these questions.

4. Possible General Assemblies of the Scientific Union in 2013

No IUGG GA.

5. Other activities in 2013

Representation at Scientific Assemblies

F. Collin represented the BNCGG at the IAHS-IAPSO-IASPEI Scientific Assembly in Gothenburg, Sweden, 2013-07-22 - 2013-07-26

Ph. Huybrecht represented the BNCGG at the IACS-IAMAS Assembly in Davos, Switzerland, 2013-07-08 to 2013-07-12

F. Darrouzet represented the BNCGG at the IAGA Scientific Assembly in Merida, Mexico, 2013-08-26 to 2013-08-31

C. Bruyninx represented the BNCGG at the IAG Scientific Assembly in Potsdam, Germany, 2013-09-01 to 2013-09-06

A. Bernard represented the BNCGG at the IAVCEI Scientific Assembly in Kagoshima, Japan, 2013-07-20 to 2013-07-24

Organization of a splinter meeting of Belgian scientists involved in IAVCEI

The BNCGG President invited Belgian scientists working in the field of volcanology at the Royal Observatory of Belgium on Wednesday 19 June at 13h30m to discuss about the role of the BNCGG with the purpose of involving more volcanologists in its activities.

Possible organisation of a IUGG GA or Celebration Event in 2019 in Brussels

On March 26, the BNCGG Bureau met the Secretary General of the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics (IUGG), in the presence of the Director General of the Royal Observatory of Belgium.

The object of his visit in Brussels was the following: In 2019 IUGG will turn to be 100. IUGG was born in Brussels and the executives of IUGG thought that perhaps it would be a good idea to celebrate this wonderful event in Brussels on or around 28 July 2019 (the date of the birth of the Union). He was asked by the IUGG Bureau to negotiate with us about any potential actions.

He presented two options and asked us whether we would be interested to invest in one of the two options. There is a third option which is to do nothing!

Option 1: To organize in Brussels the 2019 IUGG general Assembly [More or less 5000 participants during two weeks].

Of course we will then be in competition with other candidatures and will have to introduce a formal bid by Nov. 2014.

Option 2: To organize in Brussels a special event of 2 to 3 days, inviting dedicated speakers [more or less

500 participants]. In this case, the IUGG bureau will have to be informed of our intention by Sept. 2013.

After a vote amongst the effective BNCGG members, the BNCGG decided not to go for option 2 (organization of a small meeting). Concerning the organization of an IUGG General Assembly: it will be a challenge to organize it in Brussels, because the SQUARE, in the centre of Brussels, has not enough rooms. Of course, there are two alternatives in Brussels: the Heyzel Plateau, or the VUB campus. The Heyzel plateau was disregarded by the BNCGG. Presently the VUB seems to be the only option left.

6. Future perspectives

- The next BNCGG General Assembly is planned on Thursday January 23, 2014.
- The next IUGG General Assembly will be held in Prague, Czech Republic in 2015.
- The mandates of our effective and associated members have to be renewed every 4 years. The last time was in 2012, so it will be the case again in 2016. Letters for renewal will be sent in November 2015.