The IUGS Commission on Geological Sciences for Environmental Planning (COGEOENVIRONMENT)

<http://www.sgu.se/hotell/cogeo/index.htm>

In the late 1980's the IUGS recognised that the rapid increase in world population together with modern scientific and technological development, was placing an enormous strain on the Earth's natural resources and that sustainable development of our natural environment, and the safeguarding of future access to georesources, required increased input of geoscientific expertise and understanding of geological processes. It was against this background that in 1990 the IUGS established the Commission on Geological Sciences for Environmental Planning (COGEOENVIRONMENT) to specifically address the role of geoscience in environmental issues. COGEOENVIRONMENT is the youngest, and a very active and successful, Commission of IUGS.

COGEOENVIRONMENT'S operations

COGEOENVIRONMENT is a non-profit Commission, operating through voluntary input, and funded in part by IUGS but responsible for raising most of its own funding. The Commission aims to actively link the results of geoscientific research to societal needs with respect to the preservation and restoration of the natural environment. Efforts include: the encouragement of proper environmental planning and management based on geoscientific input; the prediction and mitigation of natural and human-induced hazards; and the promotion of sustainable development with respect to land-use and exploitation of natural resources.

To undertake its activities the Commission currently has an organisational structure consisting of: 14 Executive Officers (representing 12 countries); over 250 Corresponding Members (representing 85 countries); and Supporting Members, and Corporate Members.

Spreading the word

A primary activity of COGEOENVIRONMENT is the dissemination of current information relevant to its objectives and aimed at technical and non-technical decision-makers in all countries.

To achieve this, COGEOENVIRONMENT

- has established a worldwide network of Corresponding Members who provide input on environmental geoscience issues, activities, and approaches in their region.
- establishes specialist International Working Groups to address specific important issues.
- publishes a *Newsletter* which reports on: environmental geoscience activities worldwide; activities of the Working Groups; reviews of current books and websites of interest; together with a calendar of forthcoming events. The newsletter, currently of 40 pages, is published twice per year and is distributed free to all Members, and to the library of each national geological survey worldwide.
- operates a website which is the prime source of information about the Commission operations and activities. During May 2002 the website was transferred from the Australian Geological Survey Organisation (now Geoscience Australia) which has supported the website over the past 6 years, to web server space provided by

the Geological Survey of Sweden. The new website address is <<http://www.sgu.se/hotell/cogeo/index.htm>>.

- actively assists with sponsorship of scientific and technical meetings that address issues in line with its objectives.
- maintains collaborative arrangements via official liaisons and/or Memorandum of Agreements between the Commission and several international organizations (currently 25 organisations with related interests—refer to website).
- publishes (in several languages), and freely distributes, brochures specifically aimed at assisting geoscientists communicate with non-scientists, for example, by informing government agencies and organisations involved in environment, planning, engineering, and hazard mitigation, of the essential role of geoscience to complement other scientific, engineering and technical input. The primary brochure in this category produced to date (and comprising between 12 to 30 pages—depending on the language and local scientific examples depicted) is entitled *Planning and Managing the Human Environment; The Essential Role of the Geosciences*. A combined total of over 30,000 copies have been printed to date in the following languages: English, Russian; Chinese; and Spanish, with pending printing of Japanese and Malay versions during 2002. Funding is also currently being sought to allow printing of Italian, German, and Arabic versions. Any persons or organisations requiring copies of this brochure can obtain them free of charge from the Secretary General.

Working Groups for specific issues

As well as its primary activities the Commission addresses specific issues by establishing specialist International Working Groups as required. The Working Groups are established for a defined lifetime (in the order of 1 or 2 four-year terms). Each Working Group is overseen by an elected Officer of COGEOENVIRONMENT who has freedom to approach experts worldwide for their input to the objectives of the Working Group. A primary aim of each Working Group has been the production and publication of monographs or textbooks on important subjects that are currently either absent or lacking in accessible printed form. To assist with information dissemination Working Groups aim to develop websites, and they also present specific workshops/training courses on their special topics in different countries of the world. Since its inception the Commission has established specialist International Working Groups to address the following topics:

Urban Geology—promoting the role of geoscience in urban planning and development, including new development areas as well as potential hazards in developed urban areas (website to be opened in 2002);

Environmental Geoindicators—geological indicators of rapid environmental change (ie within less than 100 years). Of particular relevance for efficient management of National Parks and heritage areas (website: <http://www.lgt.lt/geoind>);

Medical Geology—the influence of natural geological factors on the health of humans, animals, and the environment (website <http://home.swipnet.se/medicalgeology>);

Geocology—addressing the relationships between Geology and Ecosystems.

The Urban Geology, and Environmental Geoinformatics Working Groups have published significant monographs on their topics. A monograph on Medical Geology, with authors from the medical, veterinary, and geoscience disciplines, will be published in November 2002, and a monograph on Geocology is under development.

In March 2002, as a consequence of the very significant advances made in addressing their specific topics, the two Working Groups of Environmental Geoinformatics, and Medical Geology were given Special Project status by the IUGS and these activities will now operate directly under the IUGS.

In addition to the above consideration is being given to development of new International Working Groups to address the essential role of geoscience in the following issues:

Geological Heritage and Tourism—the role of geoscience in defining and managing heritage areas.

Sustainable Subsurface Management—the role of geoscience in successful development of underground structures and specifically for future city and their infrastructure requirements.

Cross-Border Issues—the role of geoscience in understanding and addressing environmental management issues which cross national and/or provincial boundaries (e.g. the movement of contaminated groundwater).

Land Use Planning—the role of geoscience in the use and management of particular geological terrains and soil types to ensure retention and preservation and management of productive regions.

It is proposed that all of the above topics will be Seminar topics at the 2004 IGC in Florence, Italy.

How can you assist?

COGEOENVIRONMENT has recently embarked on a worldwide program to increase its Corresponding Membership, Supporting Membership, and Corporate Membership and also sponsorship from the private sector to allow expansion of its activities, and in particular its information dissemination operations. The types of Membership are as follows.

Corresponding Members are *active* contributors to the goals and terms of reference of the Commission. Corresponding Members supply the editor of the *Newsletter* with contributions for publication at least once in two years. Such contributions provide information on the state of the environment in their country and/or on progress made in the particular aspects of geosciences for environmental planning and management. Corresponding membership is on a personal basis only and is free of charge. Corresponding Members receive a free copy of the *Newsletter* twice a year. Any person wishing to become a Corresponding Member should submit a written request for membership including CV to the Secretary-General.

Supporting Members comprise organisations such as Geological Surveys, Ministries, Universities, Laboratories, oil and mining companies, consultants, etc. who wish to contribute to the goals and ambitions of COGEOENVIRONMENT can do so by becoming a Supporting Member of the Commission. Supporting Members

receive the *Newsletter* and all other publications made by or through the Commission; they have access to the database and might (upon request) be permitted to use the Commission's logo for their conferences, their pamphlets, etc. The annual fee for Supporting Members is US\$1000 for organisations in developed countries and US\$500 for organisations in developing countries. Corporate Members are listed on the website, and paid advertising space is available to them in the COGEOENVIRONMENT *Newsletter*.

Corporate Members are active supporters of the Commission's aims and objectives. They do not contribute directly to the Commission activities. They receive the *Newsletter* and some selected publications. Corporate membership might be on a personal (US\$25 per year) or an institutional (US\$50 per year) basis.

For more information on COGEOENVIRONMENT's activities visit the website at <<http://www.sgu.se/hotell/cogeo/index.htm>>. The Commission is actively seeking new Members in all categories of Membership, as well as ongoing financial support. Should readers wish to become Members of COGEOENVIRONMENT, contribute their expertise to any of the Working Groups, require brochures, or have any queries, please contact the COGEOENVIRONMENT Secretary General:

Dr. Joy Jacqueline Pereira
Institute for Environment and Development (LESTARI)
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
43600 Bangi, Selangor, D.E.,
MALAYSIA
Tel: +603-8921-4153
Fax: +603-8925-5104
email: cogeo@pd.jaring.my
joy@pkrisc.cc.ukm.my

Colin Simpson
COGEOENVIRONMENT Chairman
73 Beasley Street,
TORRENS ACT 2607
AUSTRALIA
Phone: +61-2-62863548
Fax: +61-2-62867548
E-mail: simpsons@webone.com.au