

Report on the General Assembly of IABO (International Association for Biological Oceanography)

Held in association with Diversitas OSC2 Cape Town, South Africa, 14th October 2009

Present: Mark Costello (General Secretary, acting chair), Charles Griffiths, Carol Heip, Mark Westneat, Bruno Danis, Jason Hall-Spencer, Falk Huettmann, Isabel Sousa-Pinto, Dave Remsen, Vince Smith, Tomas Zarzycki, Vivianne Solis-Weiss, Huw Griffiths, Anne Larigauderie, Ruthy Yahel.

Apologies: Annelies Pierrot (President), Jack Matthews (Past General Secretary), Fred Grassle (Past President), Dave Raffaelli, Mark Emmerson, other national representatives.

In the absence of the President, who had to fly back to Europe shortly prior to the meeting, Mark Costello, as General Secretary, opened and chaired the General Assembly and reported apologies from those who were not able to be present (see above). He summarised the report on the last IABO General Assembly, and reported that the main activities since then had been:

- (1) IABO co-sponsored symposia with (a) IAPSO (International Association for Physical Sciences of the Oceans) and other organisations in Cairns, Australia, 2005; Perugia, Italy, 2007; and Montreal, Canada, in 2009; and (b) on Ocean Biodiversity Informatics in Halifax, Canada 2006.
- (2) The President and General Secretary participated in the meetings of SCOR and IUBS (International Union of Biological Sciences).
- (3) Several Executive Committee members (Pierrot, Costello, Grassle, Griffiths) were very active in the Census of Marine Life, a global marine biodiversity research network endorsed by IABO.
- (4) Contacting all the national science academies to renew their national representatives to IABO.

Despite these activities IABO has, however, clearly been relatively inactive as an organisation for the past 10 years. In part this was because of lack of any clear mandate and action plan, and also because the organisation lack any dedicated secretariat funding. As a result there were no dedicated meetings held, and General Assemblies were scheduled as side events at other conferences, which meant that only a few members could attend. It may also be that the IABO Executive Committee is too small, and should be expanded, with each member being given a clearly defined responsibility to which they were held accountable.

Future activities

Most of the rest of the meeting was taken up with a general discussion revolving around what future activities IABO should engage in.

Aims of IABO

IABO aims to promote the study of biological oceanography in its widest sense, including coastal and pelagic, species biology and ecosystems.

Its objectives, as stated on the webpage (www.iabo.org/about-us) are:

The objects of the Association are to promote the advancement of knowledge of the biology of the sea, by:

Providing opportunities for communication between marine biologists. These opportunities shall include meetings and discussions either during General

Assemblies of IUBS or other suitable occasions.

Co-operating with organizations and individuals with similar aims and interests.
Given this background the following activities were proposed:

Networking

- Mark Costello would use the MARINE-B email list which he established and manages as the vehicle for IABO to engage with the wider community.
- The website would continue to be hosted by the Scottish Association for Marine Sciences.
- The new committee needed to continue to recruit new national representatives, although realising the practicalities involved in identifying suitable representatives.
- Representatives of related organisations should be established to complement the national representatives and maximise communication between organisations. The new committee should establish these contact points.

It was agreed that it was useful to retain the name and organisational structure within IUBS and ICSU, rather than try to invent anything new. There may also be advantages in the relationship that were not being realised. The fact that national representatives were highly respected and nominated by their science academies lent prestige to IABO, and thus collective endorsement by IABO of events and activities should be widely acknowledged. However, co-sponsoring of conferences was not a sufficient activity; and the unique role of IABO amongst the numerous other similar organisations (e.g. MARS, NAML, POGO, IOC, GOOS, OBIS, GLOBEC, IMBER, CoML) needs to be better defined. The fact that the European MarBEF research network in marine biodiversity and ecosystem function has ended, and that Census of Marine Life will end in 2010, raises the need for some organisation to continue networking in the fields of marine biology and oceanography. Carlo Heip and Isabel Sousa-Pinto would raise the possibility of convergence or collaboration between a proposed network of global marine biology laboratories, meeting in Naples, Italy, on 30th October 2009, and IABO.

The national representatives are highly respected within their countries and have agreed to network with their national communities in relation to IABO activities. However, only 11 countries have thus far renewed their representatives and the new Executive Committee will need to follow up with the other countries.

IABO had been invited to organise symposia with IAPSO as part of the next IUGG meeting in Melbourne from 27 June – 8 July 2011. One or more IABO volunteers were required to organise this symposium. While these were large meetings which tend to attract relatively few biologists, it was felt important to continue this relationship with IAPSO.

An exciting opportunity proposed for IABO was to form a 'marineBiodiversity' cross-cutting project within DIVERSITAS. DIVERSITAS had hosted this GA as part of its second Open Science Conference and Anne Larigauderie, DIVERSITAS Executive Officer, confirmed that DIVERSITAS was interested in filling the marine gap in its programme. The meeting was unanimous that this closer relationship with DIVERSITAS should be pursued by the incoming Executive Committee.

Elections

The outgoing President Annelies Pierrot nominated Mark Costello as next President and Charles Griffiths as General Secretary, and in the absence of any other nominations they were elected. The Past President, Annelies Pierrot, automatically remains a member of the Executive Committee, so three vacancies remained. Further nominations were requested from the community, ideally to provide a wide geographic scope of the Executive Committee, but firstly with people widely known

and respected in the field, and able to devote some time to IABO. We hereby invite national representatives to nominate persons they feel suitable for these positions, including themselves.

Addendum

Following the GA, Mark Costello re-affirmed with Hal Mooney, Chair of DIVERSITAS, the willingness of IABO to help create a Marine Biodiversity group within DIVERSITAS. A proposal in support of this would be prepared by the IABO officers and sent to DIVERSITAS for consideration within the next few weeks.

Mark Emmerson and Sonia Monteiro raised the suggestion of applying for funding for a Science Officer to assist IABO and the new DIVERSITAS Marine Biodiversity group. Mark Costello would follow up with them to help secure this funding.

The second World Congress on Marine Biodiversity (WCMB) will be held in Aberdeen on 26-30 September 2011, convened by Prof David Paterson and Dr Martin Sloan. Mark Costello would discuss with its organisers what role IABO might play in this event, which is currently without a sponsor organisation.

Mark Costello (Past General Secretary) and
Charles Griffiths (new General Secretary),
27th October 2009.