

Minutes of the business sessions at the XIX International Grassland Congress São Pedro, São Paulo, Brazil, 11-21 February 2001

Opening business meeting

The opening business session of the XIX International Grassland Congress was held on Sunday 11 February 2001. Dr Sila Carneiro da Silva (Chair, Organising Committee, XIX IGC) introduced Dr Bob Clements (Chair, IGC Continuing Committee), who formally opened the XIX IGC and presented the following report on behalf of the members of the IGC Continuing Committee, namely: Dr Vivien Gore Allen (USA); Dr Luis Ramirez-Aviles (Mexico); Dr Adilson Serrão (Brazil); Ms Chaisang Phaikaew (Thailand); Professor Dong Am Kim (South Korea); Dr Mehmet Munzur (Turkey); Dr Efisio Piano (Italy); Dr Alain Peeters (Belgium); Dr Rimantas Dapkus (Lithuania); Dr Ben Dzewela (Zimbabwe); Dr Réal Michaud (Canada); and Dr Robert Clements (Australia).

Report on the activities of the Continuing Committee: R J Clements

Distinguished guests; members of the International Grassland Congress; ladies and gentlemen:

One of my lasting memories of this Congress will be the sea of golden shirts that were worn by the team of grassland researchers that welcomed us at São Paulo airport. After travelling 15,000 kilometres it was indeed a cheerful sight, and in my mind this will always remain the Golden Congress. On behalf of the Continuing Committee of the International Grassland Congress, and on behalf of the international community of grassland scientists, I have great pleasure in declaring the Golden Congress – the XIX International Grassland Congress – open. Eu declaro aberto o congresso de ouro!

It is my privilege on behalf of the Continuing Committee of the IGC to present this report on the activities of the Continuing Committee since the Canadian Congress in 1997.

The work of the Continuing Committee during this four-year period was dominated by four major issues. These were the selection of the host country for the XX IGC (2005); consideration of opportunities to enhance collaboration between the International Grassland Congress and the International Rangeland Congress; the re-writing of the constitution of the International Grassland Congress; and the provision of advice and assistance to the Organising Committee of the XIX International Grassland Congress – the Congress we are attending now. I will deal with each of these issues in turn. I will also make a few comments about future challenges for the International Grassland Congress.

Venue for the XX International Grassland Congress

Two bids were received to host the XX International Grassland Congress. One was from the Irish Grassland Association and the British Grassland Society, in combination. The other was from the Chinese Grassland Society. Both bids were of good quality. In accordance with rule 6(d)(ii) of the constitution, the bids were considered by the members of the Continuing Committee. The Committee voted by a clear majority to support the bid from Ireland and the United Kingdom. I therefore declare that the XX International Grassland Congress will be held in Dublin, Ireland, from 26 June to 1 July 2005, with five subsequent satellite meetings at Aberystwyth, Belfast, Cork, Glasgow and Reading. Please join me in congratulating the successful bidders.

The theme of the XX International Grassland Congress will be “Grasslands: A Global Resource”. A feature of the Congress will be consideration of the role of grasslands not only in providing feed resources for livestock and in generating income for farmers, but also as a global resource for wildlife, biodiversity, soil stabilisation, and water catchment and quality. The environmental aspects of grasslands are receiving greater attention every year, and this trend seems certain to continue. Grasslands also have significant social and amenity values, and these have become increasingly important during the last twenty years and seem likely to increase even further.

I am conscious that the Peoples Republic of China has now twice invited the International Grassland Congress to meet in China. Naturally they are very disappointed not to have been selected. I have personally visited the proposed venue for a Congress in China at Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, and I am satisfied that it would have been suitable and that our Chinese colleagues are more than capable of running a successful Congress. I hope that the Chinese Grassland Society will continue with its efforts to attract the Congress to China.

Collaboration between the International Grassland Congress and the International Rangeland Congress

At the XVIII International Grassland Congress in Canada in 1997, delegates instructed the Continuing Committee to make representations to the Continuing Committee of the International Rangelands Congress (IRC) on the possibility of a joint meeting of the two Congresses, and on possible eventual amalgamation of the two Congresses.

In accordance with this instruction, I met with the then Chairperson of the IRC Continuing Committee, Dr Margaret Friedel. Together we developed a discussion paper that was circulated to all members of the Continuing Committees of both Congresses, and to a number of senior members of the international grassland research community. Feedback from members of both Continuing Committees showed a considerable diversity of opinions, with no groundswell of support for a shared Congress at that time. On your behalf, I attended the VI International Rangeland Congress in July 1999 and spoke to the delegates about the possibilities for greater collaboration between the two Congresses. In close consultation with Dr Vivien Allen and representatives of a number of rangeland societies in North America, three resolutions were drafted for consideration by the delegates at the VI International Rangeland Congress. These were:

1. To promote a more efficient and effective interchange of information on all aspects of range and grassland science, and to meet common goals and objectives, the IRC endorses the concept of closer cooperation with the IGC.
2. The Chair of the IRC Continuing Committee should explore mechanisms for meeting common goals and objectives with the Chair of the IGC Continuing Committee.
3. The IRC endorses the concept of a shared conference with the IGC by the year 2007 and requests the Continuing Committee of the IRC to develop in collaboration with the Continuing Committee of the IGC the framework for a shared conference program and procedures for selection of a host country.

The first two resolutions were supported by a considerable majority, but the third was lost by a vote of 46 votes to 71.

Despite this disappointing outcome, a groundswell of support for closer collaboration is now emerging. For the last two years, the grassland and rangeland societies of North America have consistently supported a shared Congress. These include the American Society of Agronomy, the Soil Science Society of America, the Crop Science Society of America, the American Forage and Grassland Council, the American Society of Animal Science, the Society for Range Management, and the Canadian Society of Animal Science. I expect that this momentum for change could be maintained. However, I believe that if the negotiations with the IRC are to be continued, the new IGC Continuing Committee will need a clear indication of support from the delegates at this Congress. I expect that the Resolutions Committee will be giving this matter its close consideration during the next few days, and will be consulting widely with the delegates present.

On a positive note, one example of strong positive collaboration between the two Congresses is worth mentioning. Many delegates will recall that, in 1991, the Forage and Grazing Lands Committee published a book entitled "Terminology for Grazing Lands and Grazing Animals". The Committee was chaired by Dr Vivien Allen. This publication was the result of the combined efforts of six scientific societies in North America, numerous research organisations, and representatives from other countries. Recognising that a revision of this book would be timely, the IGC and IRC are collaborating in a revision that will be published under the auspices of both Congresses. The team of writers is led by Dr Mort Kothmann from Texas A&M University, and contains representatives from both Congresses and five countries. A second team of reviewers will be chaired by Vivien Allen, and will contain representatives from many more countries to ensure that the terminology has wide support. This shared venture between the two Congresses is a good example of the benefits that could be achieved from greater collaboration. On your behalf, I thank Vivien Allen for her considerable efforts to champion and support this initiative.

Our re-written constitution

At the XVIII International Grassland Congress in Canada in 1997, delegates instructed the Continuing Committee to review the IGC Constitution, to incorporate a number of suggestions for change, and to present the constitution to the XIX Congress. Acting on these instructions, a small team led by Professor Roger Wilkins undertook the task of re-writing the existing constitution. Early drafts of the re-written constitution were widely circulated, and the completed document was published on the IGC web-site in February 2000. No suggestions for change have been received since that time, so clearly the constitution has the approval of IGC members. The

re-written constitution does not contain any changes that were not proposed and adopted in Canada or earlier, so there is no need for a formal vote of endorsement, and I commend the writing team for a sterling effort. Copies of the constitution are available at the Congress registration desk.

The Brazilian Congress

It is already clear that the Brazilian Congress is destined to be stimulating and memorable. The Organising Committee has put together a solid program of subject areas and invited presentations, and the smorgasbord of mid-Congress tours looks truly tempting. The Continuing Committee provided a number of suggestions in relation to invited speakers and topics, and the Organising Committee has picked up the best of these suggestions. I was privileged to visit the Organising Committee during 1998, and I was impressed by the vigour and commitment that was displayed by the small but dynamic team. I'm sure that by the end of the Congress we will be unanimous in congratulating our Brazilian hosts.

Other matters

The publication of the Proceedings of the XVIII Congress (Canada, 1997) was complicated by a challenging financial situation. In the circumstances, our Canadian colleagues did well to publish the entire Proceedings electronically, in CD-ROM format, and on your behalf I thank them for this. Electronic publication is growing rapidly both in frequency and in acceptability, and is surely a sign of things to come. However, I must say that it is pleasing to see that our Brazilian colleagues have already published the Proceedings of the present Congress both in hard copy and in CD-ROM format.

The IGC constitution requires me to establish two committees. One, called the **Nominating Committee**, has the task of identifying the replacements on the Continuing Committee for the next four years. We are fortunate that Dr Tom Nolan (Ireland), who was the previous Chair of the Continuing Committee, has agreed to chair the Nominating Committee during this Congress. Other members of the Nominating Committee are Dr Carlos Lascano (CIAT, Colombia), Dr Efsio Piano (Italy), and Professor Dong Am Kim (South Korea). This committee has a significant task, with seven members of the current Continuing Committee to be replaced. The Committee will be consulting carefully with delegates during the next few days.

The second committee I am required to establish is the **Resolutions Committee**. This committee has the task of receiving suggestions from delegates concerning resolutions that are to be considered during the closing business session. I am delighted that Dr Réal Michaud (Canada) has agreed to chair this committee. Other members of the Resolutions Committee are Professor Rainer Schultze-Kraft (Germany), Dr Vivien Allen (USA), Dr Luis Ramirez-Aviles (Mexico) and Professor Alain Peeters (Belgium). Please consult one of these people if you wish to propose a resolution for consideration by the delegates during the final business session.

Thoughts on the next ten years

It has become a tradition for the Chair of the Continuing Committee to make a few comments about the future, and I would like to close by doing this. In doing so, I am aware that I am following in the footsteps of some illustrious predecessors. In 1993, Dr David Crespo championed the use of legumes and noted the distortions in resource use that are sometimes caused by inadequate or ill-conceived government policies. At the same Congress in 1993, Dr Ray Brougham urged us to become involved in the fight to raise public awareness of the benefits of grasslands research. He especially urged us to get involved in influencing policy-makers. In 1997, at the Canadian Congress, Dr Tom Nolan spoke about the complexity of the modern research environment, and again mentioned the need to influence policy formulation at the local, regional and global levels.

I speak to you from a different perspective. I speak as the Director of a research funding body. My organisation, ACIAR (the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research) is a facilitator and funder of collaborative agricultural research, with a firm eye on delivering benefits to developing countries. I think it may be the first time that the Chair of the Continuing Committee has come from such a position, and it certainly does give one a different view of the world. As I look at the bulk of the current research on grasslands, I find a good deal of it simply irrelevant to the needs of developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region. This is not entirely a new observation. In 1993, at the XVII International Grassland Congress in Rockhampton, Australia, the participants at the session on feeding animals in subtropical and tropical forage systems concluded that much of the grassland research being conducted in the tropics was of little relevance to end-users in developing countries, and was not likely to be adopted because it paid inadequate attention to the economic, social, biological and farming systems constraints to adoption. Therefore, not surprisingly, my organisation funds very little grassland research in the

Asia-Pacific region. We are very proud of the grassland research we **do** support, and I am delighted that several of the project teams we are supporting are present at this Congress. Of course, there are many sources of research funds, and not every funder has such a strong focus on delivering benefits from research. But I urge every delegate here to think hard about the relevance of your research. Who is going to use the technologies you develop? How will they access those technologies? How can you make your research more relevant to end-users? If your research is not relevant, not only will the funds eventually dry up, but you may lead other researchers into irrelevance, to the detriment of our profession.

My second comment is about research innovation. All of us admire the truly innovative scientist – the person who moves us in new directions, who applies new science to attack old problems, who shatters myths, who forces us to re-think our comfortable paradigms, who sees room for progress where the rest of us can only see complexity. We need to recognise that many aspects of grassland science are now mature. This means beneficial changes in many fields of grassland science will be modest and incremental unless we take positive steps to seek truly novel approaches. We need to redefine grassland science. We need to bring it into the 21st century. We need to apply to it the most modern adaptations of information technology, biotechnology and modern social sciences. If we don't do this, we again run the risk of irrelevance and, in this case, the associated risk that by delaying the application of new science to grasslands we slow down the rate of progress in managing and improving our grasslands for the benefit of mankind.

Australians have a reputation for speaking their minds plainly, and perhaps I should apologise for being so blunt. However, these are sobering thoughts, and they deserve careful consideration. Whether the targeted end-user of our research is the farmer, the conservationist, the policy-maker, our fellow scientists, or even our students, we have an obligation to be as relevant to their needs as we can possibly be. The importance of grasslands in the world demands nothing less. As we share our thoughts and results during the next few days, let us make a conscious effort to seek and provide evidence that our research is relevant and innovative.

Concluding comments

Thank you for the privilege of chairing the Continuing Committee of the International Grassland Congress. I commend to you the strong contribution of my colleagues on the Continuing Committee, and assure you that any deficiencies in our performance are not their fault, but mine. I will have one more opportunity to speak to you again briefly at the conclusion of this Congress. In the meantime, like you, I look forward with enormous anticipation and excitement to the next few days. It is great to be with you once again, and to be at what promises to be a memorable Congress. On your behalf, I extend congratulations to the Organising Committee.

Closing business session

The closing business session of the 19th International Grassland Congress was held on 21 February 2001. Dr Bob Clements, Chair of the Continuing Committee, and Dr Sila Carneiro da Silva, Chair of the Organising Committee of the XIX IGC, jointly chaired this business session.

Resolutions

The Resolutions Committee brought forward eight resolutions for the consideration of the delegates. These were as follows:

Resolution 1 (supported by acclamation)

The members of the XIX International Grassland Congress express their sincere thanks to the government of Brazil and to all sponsoring organisations who enabled this congress to be held ;

The Congress congratulates the Organising Committee that has been outstandingly successful in putting together an excellent program and in handling the logistics of the Congress ;

Special thanks and deep appreciation are extended to Professor Sila Carneiro da Silva, President of the XIX International Grassland Congress, to Professor Wilson Mattos, Executive Secretary, and to all those involved in making this Congress a success.

Resolution 2 (supported by acclamation)

The members of the XIX International Grassland Congress would like to recognise the very good contribution of the working group, chaired by Professor Roger Wilkins, that edited the existing Constitution to comply with the various suggestions that were agreed upon in Canada in 1997 and at previous Congresses.

Resolution 3 (supported unanimously)

The members of the XIX IGC ask that the Brazilian Organising Committee makes available a supplement to the Proceedings which contains

1. a list of participants and their addresses
2. an account of the two business meetings

Resolution 4 (supported unanimously)

To promote a more efficient and effective interchange of information on all aspects of grassland and range science, and to meet common goals and objectives, the International Grassland Congress (IGC) endorses the concept of closer cooperation with the International Rangeland Congress (IRC).

Resolution 5 (supported unanimously)

The chair of the IGC Continuing Committee should explore mechanisms for meeting common goals and objectives with the chair of the IRC Continuing Committee.

Resolution 6 (supported unanimously)

The members of the XIX IGC request that the Chair of the IGC Continuing Committee meets with the Chair of the IRC Continuing Committee within the next 12 months to jointly identify and promote shared activities for meeting common goals and objectives.

Resolution 7 (supported unanimously)

The members of the XIX IGC ask that the Organising Committee of the XX IGC, as far as possible, considers incorporating in the main Congress program specific topics dealing with the contribution of grasslands to a more sustainable agriculture. Thus the program should include environmental, socio-economical and political issues across diverse ecosystems, as well as strategies to maximise the impact of research and extension.

Resolution 8 (supported unanimously)

As it was resolved at the XVII International Grassland Congress, it is recommended that the practices evident at the 1993 IGC in New Zealand/Australia, which stimulated a strong attendance of grassland scientists from developing countries, be continued and explored in future Congresses.

Membership of the Continuing Committee, 2001-05

The chair of the Nominating Committee, Dr Tom Nolan, announced the nomination of the following members to represent the various regions defined in the IGC constitution:

- Region 1 (North America): Dr Vivien Gore Allen (USA)
- Region 2 (Central America): Dr Luis Ramirez-Aviles (Mexico)
- Region 3 (South America): Dr Raul Vera (Chile)
- Region 4 (South and South-East Asia): Ms Chaisang Phaikaew (Thailand)
- Region 5 (Oceania): Dr Gavin Sheath (New Zealand)
- Region 6 (East Asia): Dr Masakazu Goto (Japan)
- Region 7 (Middle East): Dr Hossein Arzani (Iran)
- Region 8 (Mediterranean): Dr Maria E V Lourenço (Portugal)
- Region 9 (Europe): Dr Alain Peeters (Belgium)
- Region 10 (North Eurasia): Dr Geza Nagy (Hungary)
- Region 11 (Africa other than Regions 7 and 8): Dr Apollo Bwonya Orodho (Kenya)
- Immediate past host country: Dr Sila Carneiro da Silva (Brazil).

The nominations were endorsed by acclamation. The members of the new Continuing Committee then retired briefly to elect a new Chair, Dr Vivien Allen. Dr Allen subsequently addressed the Congress delegates, emphasising the opportunities and challenges that would confront the Continuing Committee during the next four years.

Presentation by the host countries of the next Congress

Dr John Walsh (Ireland) and Dr Roger Wilkins (United Kingdom) presented a brief overview of the next (XX) International Grassland Congress and the proposed venue, and formally invited the delegates present in Brazil to attend.

Closure

Dr Sila Carneiro da Silva thanked delegates for attending the XIX Congress. He thanked the staff of the Hotel Fazenda Fonte Colina Verde (the Congress venue), and the people who had organised the social functions. He mentioned particularly the work of his colleagues on the Organising Committee, and the “golden team” that had worked so hard during the Congress to satisfy the requirements of the delegates.