

## Swansea, Wales, 21-22 July 2007

Regular Council Members present (elected in elections performed in 2007): J.P. Bakker (NL), M. Barbour (US), E.O. Box (US), H. Bruelheide (DE), A. Chiarucci (IT), U. Deil (DE), M. Diekmann (DE), T. Herben (CZ), J. Lepš (CZ), E. van der Maarel (NL), L. Mucina (ZA), R. Peet (US), V. De Patta Pillar (BR), J.H.J. Schaminée (NL), N.A.C. Smits (NL) and J.B. Wilson (NZ), M. Zobel (ES)..

Other Council Members present (co-opted on ad hoc basis; representatives of the regional sections): H. Thomas & A. MacDonald (local organisers of the Swansea 2007 meeting), S. Will-Wolf (representing the North American Section).

Further attendees: I. Tsiripidis (Monday only: on behalf of the planned meeting in Greece 2009), J. Dengler (invited to attend to explain the proposal for a new electronic journal).

### **Part 1, July 21: Recorded by outgoing Secretary Schaminée**

#### **1. Opening**

E. Box, the incumbent President of the IAVS, opened the meeting at 20.00.

#### **2. Approval of minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting, in Palmerston North, February 2007, as sent by e-mail to all members of the new IAVS Council (2007-2011), were approved. The meeting in New Zealand was successful, thanks to the great effort of the Local Arrangements Committee, and J. Rapson in particular.

#### **3. Reports**

##### **3.1 Financial Report**

The financial situation of the IAVS during the year 2006 was reported by the treasurer, J. Schaminée, based on figures delivered by the Administrator N. Smits. The negative balance over the year 2006 will change into a positive one as the 7,500 euro lent to the organizers of the Swansea symposium will be repaid. H. Thomas of the local committee reported that there will be a surplus, which will be donated to the IAVS. Furthermore, there will be some extra income in 2006 as a result of profit sharing with Opulus Press (see the report of the Publication Officer).

A proposal was accepted and approved that the Global Fund in the future also could be used for financial support of students and young scientists of so-called poor countries to attend the annual meetings. This is possible because of the improved financial situation as a result of the new policy of the Adoption Committee to grant electronic subscriptions of JVS and AVS. The definition of 'poor countries' will be handled by the Adoption Committee.

##### **3.2 Report of the Publication Officer**

IAVS Publication Officer Martin Diekmann presented the report for the year 2006. Some figures from Opulus Press had become available only shortly before the meeting so the overview could not be sent to the Council members in advance. The written report will be distributed electronically to members of the Council by the Publication Officer.

##### **3.3 Reports of Working Groups, Commissions and Regional Sections.**

During the meeting in Uppsala in 1998, it was decided that Working Groups, Commissions, and Regional Sections should provide an annual report to the Council and that these reports should be published in the IAVS Bulletin. Annual reports of the Working Group on Long-term Vegetation Dynamics (by J. Bakker), the European Vegetation Survey (by J. Schaminée on behalf of J. Rodwell), the North America Section (by Susan Will-Wolf), and the Working Group on EcolInformatics (by Bob Peet) were presented and briefly discussed. L. Mucina informed the Council that the South Africa Section probably will be disbanded. The annual reports can be found elsewhere in the *Bulletin*.

##### **3.4 IAVS Bulletin, Membership list, and News Alerts**

*IAVS Bulletin* 10 was published in December 2006. It was distributed at the 49th IAVS meeting in Palmerston North, sent to all IAVS members by regular post, and made available over the Internet ([www.iavs.org](http://www.iavs.org)).

A new IAVS Membership List (March 2007) has been sent by regular post to all IAVS members. It replaces the list that was distributed at the meeting in Lisbon (PT; July 2005). The new list was updated and corrected by E. van der Maarel in

collaboration with N. Smits and J. Schaminée, and published by Opulus Press.

At the meeting in New Zealand the suggestion was made to develop a Newsletter, to be circulated by e-mail, which would appear several times a year, in addition to the IAVS Bulletin. So far three IAVS News Alerts have been e-mailed to all IAVS members.

#### **4. Installation of the new Council and election of the Executive Committee.**

The new Council, elected by e-mail ballot in spring 2007, was officially installed. A discussion took place on the filling of the positions of President, Secretary-Treasurer, and Publication Officer, after which a short list of ten candidates for the Executive Committee was compiled. Of these, seven persons were elected by the direct vote of the 17 Council members present and 10 proxy votes of Council members unable to attend. The following persons were elected to the new Executive Committee: V. De Patta Pillar, M. Diekmann, J. Loidi, L. Mucina, R. Peet, J. Schaminée and M. Zobel.

A short meeting of the newly elected Executive Committee took place at which the members agreed to assume the following positions:

President: R. Peet (US)

Secretary & Treasurer: L. Mucina (ZA)

Publication Officer: M. Diekmann (DE)

Vice President: V. De Patta Pillar (BR)

Vice President: J. Loidi (ES)

Vice President: J.H.J. Schaminée (NL)

Vice President: M. Zobel (EE)

#### **Part 2, July 21: Recorded by Secretary Mucina**

After the announcement of the new officers, the Council meeting re-assumed under the chair of R. Peet (the new President), assisted by L. Mucina (the new Secretary-Treasurer).

#### **5. Guidelines for the election of the Council and revision of the classification of countries for the purpose of this election**

During preparations for the election of the new Council several issues emerged regarding the nomination of the candidates, eligibility of the candidates, their geographic affiliation (hence their possible representative function for particular regions), and the definitions of such regions. The outgoing Executive Committee received detailed proposals from E. Box (the outgoing President) and E. van der Maarel (Honorary Member). President Peet and the Secretary-Treasurer Mucina made the Council aware of their intention to re-visit our procedures for electing members of the Council as part of the formulation of new by-laws and potentially revising the statutes. Peet suggested that further comments and suggestions on the matter be addressed to Secretary Mucina who agreed to lead the process of formulation of new by-laws. The Secretary will approach all members of the Council for comments and suggestions. These suggestions will inform the drafting of new by-laws and revision of statutes by the Executive Committee. Proposed new bylaws and revised statutes will be sent to members of the Council for discussion and approval prior to the next meeting in Stellenbosch (South Africa).

Because of the late hour, the President adjourned the meeting at 22:50 and suggested that the meeting be resumed the next day.

#### **Part 3, July 22: Recorded by Secretary Mucina**

During the course of Monday, July 22, 2007 the President announced that the Council meeting would re-convene at 19:30 the same day to complete unfinished business.

#### **6. Relationship IAVS – Opulus Press.**

The Chair opened the meeting by addressing the issue of the relationship between IAVS and Opulus Press. He briefly summarised a lengthy exchange of e-mails within the new Council which took place prior to the Swansea meeting. This

discussion addressed the current status and way forward of the relationship between IAVS and Opulus Press, publisher of our two journals – Journal of Vegetation Science and Applied Vegetation Science. The discussion and the accompanying vote to not extend the current contract was initiated by the old Council at the February 2007 New Zealand meeting. Then Secretary J. Schaminée and Publication Officer M. Diekmann explained in e-mail messages to the Council (sent prior to the Swansea meeting) the reasons for this decision. By electronic ballot the Council decided that the contract would not be extended automatically. Secretary Schaminée communicated this decision to Opulus Press and invited a proposal for a new contract.

The Chair reported that the need for re-examination of the contract was motivated by recent changes in the publishing industry as well as need for increased and more predictable income to IAVS. He further informed the Council that IAVS has been approached by several other publishers interested in publishing our journals. Several interested publishers have submitted written proposals.

Because of the seriousness of the matter, the Chair suggested that the Council establish a Publication Committee (of 5 members from within the Council) whose mandate will be to identify and compile a list of key issues and then prepare a formal request for proposals to be sent to Opulus and other interested publishers.

The discussion at the meeting revealed that the following initial list of issues of importance:

1. clear responsibilities of IAVS and Publishers
2. transparency of the revenue stream
3. ownership of the title and copyright
4. services to IAVS, editors, readers
5. quality and circulation of *Applied Vegetation Science & Journal of Vegetation Science*

The final list of issues and proposed request for proposals will be communicated to the Executive Committee and discussed therein. As soon as the Executive Committee agrees on the request for proposals the Publication Committee will approach interested publishers. The Publication Committee will review the proposals and forward them to the Executive Committee with their recommendations. The Executive Committee will review the recommendations, negotiate as needed with potential publishers and ultimately forward a proposed new contract to the Council for approval. The Chair indicated that a new contract has to be in place (signed) by May 1, 2008 at the latest.

Action: Executive Committee will establish (during the meeting in Swansea) the Publication Committee and charge it with further action in this matter.

## **7. Activities during the coming years**

The yearly symposia of IAVS planned for the period 2008-2010 were discussed.

**2008:** L. Mucina presented a brief report on progress in organization of the meeting to be held in Stellenbosch, South Africa. Organization of the meeting is well on track; a website has been launched and, to-date, about 80 participants have declared their preliminary intent to attend. Some Council members suggested that the costs of the meeting (in general) be kept reasonably low with reduced rates for students, assistance to colleagues from poorer countries, and economical accommodation. Mucina assured the Council that all these issues are being taken seriously by the Local Arrangement Committee in Stellenbosch.

**2009:** I. Tsiripidis (on behalf of a group of colleagues from Hellas, headed by Prof. P. Dimopoulos, Agrinio, GR) conveyed the message that the 2009 IAVS symposium will be held in Crete (Heracleion or Chania), possibly in May. The Council unanimously welcomed the suggestion and agreed to the proposal.

**2010:** The fate of the 2010 yearly symposium is still unclear, but two suggestions were discussed. M. Barbour reminded us that colleagues from Encenada (Baja California, MX) proposed some time ago to host the meeting. Barbour will investigate

and report back to the Council. V. Pillar suggested that the 2010 meeting could be held in South America again, perhaps in Argentina. He agreed to contact colleagues in Cordoba (AR) and will report back to the Council. Members of the Council expressed support for both suggested locations.

The Council further discussed several issues pertinent to organization of the yearly meetings. Particular attention was devoted to the question of involvement of the Executive Committee and/or the Council in supervising (co-coordinating, advising upon) the academic program. Several colleagues felt that the IAVS leadership (Executive Committee or Council)) should be more actively involved in the academic program of the meetings, either directly or through appointment of a program committee. Other colleagues felt that the Local Arrangements Committee should be given the freedom to decide on the topic, contents, and format of the meeting on their own. Many agreed that the local organizers should consult colleagues who have organised or otherwise managed symposia in the past to assure a high-quality scientific program. The Portugal symposium was mentioned as one where organizers involved colleagues in preparation of the scientific program (management of sessions, abstract screening, and abstract editing) with much success. There was general agreement on the issue that the Local Arrangements Committee should learn from the experience of previous meetings, consult the organizers of the early meetings, and involve other colleagues (perhaps Council members) in shaping the academic program. Mucina recommended that the setting of parameters for the yearly meetings be handled during the coming inter-symposium period, possibly as part of the establishment of new by-laws.

## **8. Discussion on a new Journal for Vegetation Classification**

The Chair briefly informed the Council of an initiative started by J. Dengler (also present at this meeting) aimed at establishment of an electronic journal devoted to publishing of descriptive papers on topics such as vegetation classification and vegetation surveys. An e-mail discussion on the topic has been in progress, organised by J. Dengler, with strong involvement of L. Mucina, R. Peet and E. van der Maarel. J. Dengler informed the Council briefly about this discussion, which revealed that there is a need for a journal willing to publish descriptive papers, particularly long papers or papers with large amounts of supporting material. There was, in general, positive feeling about this initiative, especially because of the electronic nature of the publication. The e-mail discussion also revealed general support for linking such a journal to IAVS. However, some colleagues expressed the view that such a journal is not necessary because of other existing publications such as *Phytocoenologia*, *Tuexenia* and *Folia Geobotanica*, all of which might come under competitive pressure if a new journal is launched. Another concern raised was the size of the pool of potential authors (J. Dengler agreed to investigate the pool of potential authors). L. Mucina reminded the Council that the proposal is still in a preliminary stage and many issues (e.g., name, format, publication model, financial model, etc.) still have to be worked out. The Council asked Dengler to prepare a summary of the previous electronic discussion and forward the document to the President or Secretary for further consideration by the Council. As issues regarding the proposed journal become clearer, the Council will be informed and asked for input.

## **9. Issues emerging**

### **9.1 Business outside the Annual Meeting**

The Chair has emphasized that the Executive Committee will use electronic means of communication to manage the daily business of IAVS. Secretary Mucina informed the Council that the procedures of the Executive Committee and of the Council (communication, voting system, etc.) will be handled as part of the preparation of new by-laws.

### **9.2 Policies and Procedures: expansion of by-laws**

The Chair and the Secretary reported that they feel that the ways IAVS pursues its business should undergo scrutiny and formalization. Such procedures should be captured in the form of a series of the new by-laws to be prepared, discussed and submitted by the Executive Committee for approval by the Council and ultimately for approval by the General Assembly at the 2008 IAVS symposium in Stellenbosch.

### **9.3 Membership – Sustainability**

The Executive Committee recognizes that the membership issues, especially the negative trend in number of members,

should be addressed as a matter of high priority. All members of the Council are encouraged to propose ways to boost membership. Several proposals were made in the course of the discussion including:

1. Upgrade the IAVS website to make it more attractive, especially for younger people;
2. Feature a number member benefits (such as a lower attendance fee for members at the meetings, awards at the meetings, privileged access to information about activities of IAVS, job-market announcements etc.);
3. Foster use of Associate Membership for colleagues from countries with currency problems as well as for students and young scientists;
4. Revisit the advantages IAVS members would have in publishing in the existing journals owned by IAVS;

Provide a clear separation of membership from journal subscriptions