

GEOGRAPHY, CULTURE, AND SOCIETY FOR OUR FUTURE EARTH

INTERNATIONAL GEOGRAPHICAL UNION CONFERENCE IN MOSCOW,
17–22 AUGUST 2015



IGUMoscow2015

In 2015 (from August 17 to 21), Moscow hosted the Regional Conference of the International Geographical Union (IGU) for the third time since the International Geographical Congress of 1976, when over 2,000 participants from around the world gathered in the Soviet capital for lectures, discussions, workshops, and excursions. The motto of the conference was “Geography, Culture, and Society for our Future Earth”. The IGU 2015 conference was preceded by the IGU Congress took place in Cologne in 2012 and the IGU regional conferences in Tel Aviv (2010), Santiago (2011), Kyoto (2013), and Krakow (2014).

The IGU 2015 Regional Conference was organized by the Faculty of Geography of Lomonosov Moscow State University, the Institute of Geography of Russian Academy of Sciences, and the Russian Geographical Society. Its venue was Moscow State University. It gathered 1658 participants from 73 countries. Naturally, Russian geographers represented the largest group – 764 participants. Many participants came from China (173), India (90), USA (57), Germany (38), Spain (28), and Brazil (28) (Table 1). The “IGU Moscow 2015” was focused on five main themes: Urban Environment, Polar Studies, Climate Change, Global Conflict, and Regional Sustainability. The program was based on

principles of diversity and interdisciplinary exchange. It featured a variety of meetings, including plenary sessions, lectures, panel discussions, workshops, and other events.

The conference had 32 working Commissions. A number of “thematic” sessions were held on the initiative of separate scholars and research teams. Oral sessions were composed of three, four, or five presentations. When three or four presentations took place in a single time slot, the duration of each presentation was set at 20 minutes with a short discussion after each presentation. When five presentations took place in a single time slot, the duration of each presentation was set at 15 minutes with a 5-minute-long discussion after each presentation.

Key note and interdisciplinary “thematic” lectures were in the focus of the conference and were attended by many participants. Professor **Gordon Macbean** (Canada), a well-known climatologist and President of ICSU, discussed different views on the problem of climate change and its challenges to the international scientific community and in particular the program “Future Earth”. Professor **Georg Gartner** (Austria), President of the International Cartographic Association, talked about the role of cartography in contemporary

Table 1. List of countries by attendance

Country	Number of participants	Country	Number of participants	Country	Number of participants	Country	Number of participants
Russian Federation	764	Canada	22	Romania	12	Saudi Arabia	8
China	173	South Africa	22	Finland	10	Poland	8
India	90	Italy	21	Australia	9	Czech Republic	7
Japan	59	Mexico	20	Iran	9	Egypt	7
United States of America	57	Turkey	20	Portugal	9	Singapore	7
Germany	38	Republic of Korea	17	Netherlands	9	Hungary	6
Spain	28	United Kingdom	17	Belgium	8	Kazakhstan	6
Brazil	27	Israel	15	Indonesia	8	Norway	6
France	24	Switzerland	11	Nigeria	8	Sweden	6

society. **Benno Werlen** (Germany), Chair of the IGU Commission on Cultural Approach in Geography and Coordinator of the International Year of Global Understanding, informed the audience about the progress of this ambitious project initiated by the IGU. Professor **John O'Loughlin** (USA), one of the world leading political geographers, focused his presentation on the results of a large interdisciplinary project on the impact of global change on violence in Africa. Professor **Alexander Murphy**, former President of the Association of American Geographers, raised the question of the future of geographical disciplines facing dynamic transformations in society and environment. Professor **Solomon Kroonenberg** (the Netherlands) discussed the problem of geographical forecasts and predictability using the case of the Caspian Sea. Professor **Valery Tishkov**, the most prominent figure in the studies of identities, ethnology, and cultural anthropology in Russia, entitled his lecture "Culture Complexity of Contemporary Nations". Professor **Vladimir Kolosov**, President of the IGU, summarized specific features and the main trends in the development

of geography in Russia. Professor **Shirlena Young** (Singapore) offered a key lecture on the achievements of the IGU Commission on Gender in Geography which was recognized the most active IGU Commission in 2014.

The lectures given by Professors **Karl Donert** (UK, President of Eurogeo), **Céline Rozenblat** (Switzerland), **Elena dell'Agnese** (Italy), **Takashi Yamazaki** (Japan), **Cosimo Palagiano** (Italy), **Brad Coombes** (New Zealand), **Melinda Laituri** and **Lee Schwartz** (USA), and **Alexander Pelyasov** and **Nadezhda Zamiatina** (Russia) were related to diverse themes of interest to experts and gathered full classrooms.

A special room was designated specifically for the social program and contained presentations of various geographical enterprises and institutions, conference partners, and exhibitors.

Geographical education and integration of young scholars was central to each of the Conference themes. The program included special events:

"The Day of Young Scholars", with a competition for the best presentation and other awards; a master Class "Fundraising and Writing Proposals" (led by **Andrey Petrov** and **Dmitry Streletskiy**; YES Network – IGU joint Session "Geoheritages, a Recorder of the Global Change Along the Silk Road for Future Sustainable Development" (led by **Meng Wang**); a panel discussion "The Role of Young Researchers' Networks in Shaping the Future of Geographical Sciences"; and a video-training workshop "Improving Your Presentation Skills" (by **Joos Droogleever FORTUIJN** and **Joop van der SCHEE**). To support attendance by young scientists, the Local Organizing Committee grants were given to postgraduate students and early career scientists from low income countries (50 in total).

The Commission on Geographical Education held the Day of Geography Teacher together with the Russian Association of Geography Teachers. Special sessions included "Academic Geography for Secondary Schools" and "Teaching Geography in the University". The "IGU Moscow" also conducted the 2015 International Geographical Olympiad.

The IGU 2015 Organising Committee encouraged Conference participants to enjoy campus tours and a variety of other excursions in and around Moscow. Following the conference, there was a series of trips to St. Petersburg and Kazan.

Sergey R. Chalov, Vladimir A. Kolosov