

## Initiatives for the Future of Great Rivers Association

### ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT

2020

#### Preamble

Like many associative organisations of international reach, IFGR's activities were affected by the consequences of the world health crisis linked to the Covid-19 epidemic in 2020. The 10<sup>th</sup> international session was postponed several times, to be finally programmed for September 2021. Journeys programmed to the great rivers of the world (Amazon, Volga) had to be cancelled and the international events in which IFGR was scheduled to participate (World Conservation Congress, COP15 Biodiversity, COP26 Climate) have all been carried over to 2021.

Nonetheless, IFGR maintained its associative operations, by favouring videoconferences for exchanges between its members and it renewed the mandates of the administrators and active members that had expired in 2020. Regarding its external operations, IFGR pursued its main collaborations and participations in events in France and also started new projects. Lastly, it considerably boosted its audience during this period when digital information on environmental issues took on a new dimension.

### The Association's INTERNAL OPERATION and relations with THIRD PARTIES

#### Life of the association

The year was marked by considerable internal legal activity. The three-year mandates of the members of the Management Board and the Rivers Committee, appointed during the Association's Management Board constitutive session, terminated at the end of 2020. Their renewal provided the opportunity to **modify the articles of association and the internal rules of the Association and makes changes to the organisation of the community of active members.**

Two Management Board meetings and an Ordinary General Assembly were held.

• **Management Board meeting of 12 June 2020:**

- Adoption of the activity report on the financial situation for 2019;
- Presentation of the accounts closed for the year ended on 31/12/2019;
- Renewal of the mandate of Erik Orsenna as Chairman of the association and the non-renewal of the mandate of Bernard Guirkingner (who did not apply for his renewal);
- Modification in the dynamics of coordination with our members via the renewal of the Rivers Committee and the organisation of an Expert-Resource Committee; renewal of mandates.

• **Ordinary General Assembly of 21 September 2020:**

- Presentation and approval of the activity report of 2019;
- Presentation of the financial report of 2019 and its approval;
- Approval of the accounts closed on 31/12/2019 and assignment of the result;
- Acknowledgement of the Auditor's report;
- Election of Tamsir Ndiaye, member of the General Assembly, to the association's Management Board;
- Notification of the decision of the Management Board regarding the organisation of IFGR, with the constitution of an Expert-Resource Committee, in addition to the existing Rivers Committee.

This General Assembly welcomed 4 new persons to strengthen the Rivers Committee with their experience, expertise and geographical origins:

- Dr Anoulak Kittikhoun, Director of strategy and partnerships, Secretariat of the Mekong River Commission (Laos);
- Jacqueline Nyirakamana, specialist in cross-border cooperation on water resources, Ministry of the Environment (Rwanda);
- Molly S. Wood, national specialist on sediments, Water Resources Division, United States Geological Survey – USGS (United States);
- Dominique Berod, Director of the Terrestrial Systems Surveillance Division, World Meteorological Organisation (Switzerland).

• **Management Board of 4 December 2020:**

- Adoption of the project to modify IFGR's articles of association, which will be submitted to a vote of the members at an Extraordinary General Assembly in 2021;
- Acknowledgement of the nomination of a new administrator appointed by the Supervisory Board of the Compagnie Nationale du Rhône, Mr Jean-Louis Chaussade;
- Adoption of the amended internal rules of the Association, incorporating the changes made to the organisation.

Since the development of the Association with the inclusion of new experts and new rivers was one of its priorities, a mission was undertaken in January (before the health restrictions) in Lisbon by Erik Orsenna, with the support of the French Embassy in Portugal, to meet the different actors of the River Tagus. To date, unfortunately, we have not succeeded in finding a representative.

## New strategy 2021-2025

During the second half of the year, the IFGR team worked on the association's new strategy for 2021, as the previous strategic plan formulated after the change in IFGR's legal status as an association came to an end in 2020.

The work focused on both the **evolution of the associative project**, with respect to the evaluation of the action of 2018-2020, and the **association's future up to 2025**, in order to integrate the IFGR project in the medium and long-terms. This projection was vital to build responses to the current challenges. It was placed in perspective with reflections expressed regarding the implementation of a strategy of private and public fundraising, to complete and strengthen the existing support (CNR) given to IFGR. This work is being carried out with the aid of two consultants specialised in sponsorships, seconded by CNR, who have assisted IFGR and CNR since last July to improve the efficiency of the approach taken.

The administrators and the members of IFGR were associated with the formulation of this new strategy with the organisation of collective workshops in September, and then by two workgroups gathering certain members between November 2020 and January 2021.

The new strategy and the first action plan associated with it (2021-2022) were disclosed at a meeting of the Management Board on 10 February 2021, and will be presented at the General Assembly in April.

## Relations with third parties

**A new partnership agreement between the Association and CNR was signed on 14 December 2020 for 5 years (2021-2025)**, since the previous sponsorship agreement signed in 2017 and its rider of 2018 had reached their terms. This new partnership agreement was drawn up in the framework of IFGR's strategy for 2021-2025 to carry out common actions and permit CNR to enhance its practices through exchanges and feedback from experience with other major rivers of the world.

The donation for 2021 was made by virtue of CNR's Missions in the General Interest, while the following donations will be made by virtue of the 1<sup>st</sup> Rhone Plan, contingent on the fulfilment of the suspensive conditions stipulated by CNR in the agreement. It also includes support in kind, in the form of services (availability of competences and premises) and donations of goods (material).

## ACTIONS IN THE GENERAL INTEREST organised directly by the Association

### No plastic in rivers Charter



IFGR, the Tara Ocean Foundation and CNR launched an initiative in 2020 to mobilise and federate local elected representatives to combat plastic pollution in aquatic habitats, on the occasion of the Municipal and Community elections. The Charter **“My territory takes a stand: rivers without**

**plastic, the oceans protected”** proposes 15 measures that the elected representatives committed themselves to implementing with local services, communities, businesses and associations.

At the end of 2020, this Charter brought together more than 130 signatories from all over France, including mayors of small municipalities and large towns and cities crossed by a big river. It has received support from two associations of elected representatives, the AMF (Association of the mayors of France) and the APVF (Association of Small Towns of France) and the agreement of the ADEME to participate in the Steering Committee and the distribution of tools and services to assist local authorities to implement the charter.

The initiative is being communicated by:

- a dedicated internet site developed and managed by IFGR: [www.fleuve-sans-plastique.fr](http://www.fleuve-sans-plastique.fr);
- the organisation by the Tara Ocean Foundation of a press conference on 27 February on the occasion of the arrival of the schooner Tara in Paris (about thirty journalists were present) and the diffusion of two press releases written by IFGR.

A strong contributor to the emergence of this project, IFGR will continue its involvement in 2021 to organise and develop this initiative with its partners.

### Logbook “COVID-19: the latest world news viewed by IFGR”

The rich diversity of its members, associated with the strong conviction that drives it regarding the bonds that link human and health and that of habitats, has led Initiatives for the Future of Great Rivers to provide keys for interpreting the world crisis triggered by COVID-19, and propose paths for tomorrow.

From March to June 2020, it gave its Rivers Committee and its partners the means to express themselves in the form of a logbook. Seen from the perspective of rivers, the contributions tackle issues of health, as well as the impacts and challenges present in other areas of our societies: history, transport, agriculture, energy, etc.

Initially published in the form of a **weekly newsletter**, the 25 interviews and forums collected were grouped by theme in a **digital collection** at the beginning of September.

They made it possible to maintain strong links with IFGR members during spring 2020. IFGR also shared various contributions from its members with the general public (on its internet site, social networks and articles on *Carenews*), highlighting the cross disciplinary and multidisciplinary facets of its reflections.

➔ **Digital collection** – [click here](#)

## Communication

- **A video titled “IFGR ID card”** was produced in the first quarter. Available in French and English, it presents the association’s mission and approach in 2 min 30 s.

- **“The climate of rivers” newsletter:**

During 2020, **4 issues of the quarterly newsletter “The climate of rivers” (March, June, September, December)** were diffused in French and English thanks to a file including more than 1,700 contacts.

- **Digital media:**

For its external communication, the Association also has:

- **Its internet site:** 44,900 users in 2020, of which 90% were new visitors and 60% French ones; 93,350 pages were viewed in the top 3 headings consulted: “let’s speak rivers” (more than a third of the pages viewed); news; “your solutions” (the solutions platform).
- **The social networks Linked-in** (900 subscribers, i.e. 3 times more than in 2019) and **Twitter** (more than 860 subscribers, +30% vs 2019), as well as a page on YouTube.

IFGR also contributed in the form of an interview *“Water must remain a source of life in West Africa”* with Erik Orsenna and Hamed Semega, High Commissioner of the OMVS to the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of **Barometer of water, health and drainage: “Is water in crisis?”** published by the NGO Solidarités International in March.



**COVID-19 :**  
**THE LATEST WORLD NEWS**  
**VIEWED BY IFGR**



## ACTIONS IN THE GENERAL INTEREST organised with the association's partners

### Edition



IFGR supported the publication of the 25<sup>th</sup> edition of the **Calendar of Religions**, produced by the Swiss publishing house Agora, in collaboration with the Interreligious Platform of Geneva (PFIR). Devoted to the “spirit of rivers”, this calendar offers an original interpretation of sixteen large rivers on the basis of religious rituals and traditions. 10,000 copies were printed in French, English and German and IFGR distributed it to target French institutions and

its international members.

For its release, with PFIR and Agora, IFGR organised the **conference “Rivers and human beings: is there a spiritual relationship?”**, during the Alternatiba Festival, on 24 September, at the University of Geneva. Gilles Mulhauser and Pascal Bourdeaux intervened as representatives of IFGR.

### An event for the general public

IFGR participated in an event launched by the publishing house Actes Sud in Arles: **“Act for Life”**. CNR was one of the partners of the event.

The first edition was held from 24 to 30 August. This edition allowed the team to dialogue with different partners.

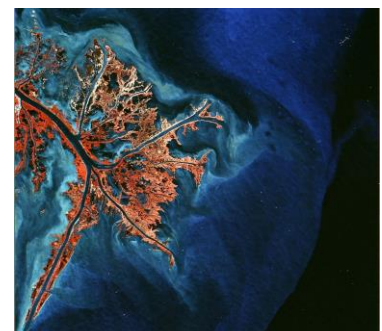
In particular, Erik Orsenna intervened as Chairman of IFGR during the debate “Give life back to rivers” on Saturday 29 August.

➔ [Watch the replay here](#)



### Conferences

In partnership with the CNES (National Centre of Space Studies) and the Partenariat Français sur l'Eau, IFGR organised a conference for professionals and the press: **“A world of water at +4°C”** on 12 October, on the eve of the Day of Reducing the Risk of Disaster, at the headquarters of the CNES. It aimed at presenting the conditions and practical solutions for better managing water resources in the context of climate change.



**INVITATION**

Erik Orsenna intervened on behalf of IFGR.

➔ [Watch the replay here](#)

Furthermore, Erik Orsenna was invited to the **Foundations Workshop: “Act in the face of fragilities, the foundations are on the move!”** of the **Centre Français des Fonds et Fondations** on 18 November for the round table “From environmental fragilities to human ones, a vital cross-disciplinary approach.

➔ [Watch the replay here](#)



## PARTICIPATION IN COLLECTIVE ACTIONS

IAGF participates in different national and international coalitions to give a voice to rivers and contribute to advocacy and joint actions to preserve freshwater resources.

### Water & Climate

IFGR joined an advisory workgroup on cross-border cooperation to prepare the **World Water Forum** which will finally be held in March 2022 at Dakar.

The General Secretary of the IFGR also worked in 2020 to draw closer links with the **World Meteorological Organisation (WMO)**, a UN agency specialised in the weather, the climate and data, that will be concretised at the beginning of 2021 by the signature of a Memorandum Of Understanding.

### Health

At the end of 2020 IFGR joined the **Committee of Strategic Partners of the One Sustainable Health Forum**, a multidisciplinary approach aimed at improving global health and its priority inclusion in the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030. Launched by the Foundation *Sustainable Health for All*, it has set up international workgroups in which participate 2 IFGR members (Mirdad Kazanji and Irina Ribarova) and is organising two international events: the World Health Summit in Berlin (2021) and Lyon (2022). IFGR is also a member of COMOP, the operational committee that reflects on and guides the structuring of the new foundation **One Sustainable Health**, which has operational responsibility for the OSH forum.

## Biodiversity

As a member of the workgroup **Aquatic Biodiversity and Nature Based-Solutions of the PFE**, IFGR participated in a seminar organised at Rochefort and in the marsh of Brouage on 1 and 2 October.

A partner of the initiative **Vigilife** (Observatoire Mondial du Vivant - World Observatory of Life - which uses new environmental DNA technology), that will be presented on the occasion of the IUCN's World Conservation Congress, IFGR participated in several workshops during 2020 and contributed to writing the first edition of the magazine, scheduled for publication at the beginning of 2021.

## DONATIONS RECEIVED

In answer to a call for funds, funds were paid for the year 2020 by CNR, in conformity with the conditions set out in the rider of the financial sponsorship agreement signed on 1 December 2018. The aim of the agreement is to finance the association's activities in the general interest. The payment was made in one instalment, on 20 February 2020.

Furthermore, in the framework of the partnership agreement of 2021-2025 signed between CNR and IFGR on 14 December 2020, IFGR made another call for funds to CNR for the year 2021. This sum was paid into the association's bank account on 18 December 2020.

Lastly, the association received a total amount of two thousand six hundred and eighty-seven euros (€2,687) by way of subscriptions for the year 2020, from its members, in accordance with the scale of subscriptions voted during the Management Board meeting of 25 September 2018. The specific context of 2020, without any physical meeting with the members of the association, did not favour the payment by all the members of their subscriptions.

## EVENTS POST-CLOSURE

IFGR's activities at the beginning of 2021 depend on the evolution of the world health situation, regarding meetings and travel. In particular, the Management Board, meeting held informally at the beginning of February, once again decided to postpone IFGR's 10<sup>th</sup> international session, from April to the end of September 2021. At best missions will be programmed for the second semester.

IFGR is nonetheless continuing its teleworking activity with all its members and partners. In particular, the association will begin to implement the strategy and action plan 2021-2022 which will be presented soon to the administrators and members.



Likewise, for its partnership with the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) signed in the form of a Memorandum Of Understanding on 25 January 2021 for 4 years (2021-2024).

So far, the crisis linked to COVID-19 has not had any impact on the association's continuation as it benefitted from the donation paid by CNR for the year 2021 and has not contracted any loan. However, we remain vigilant regarding the possible consequences of this crisis on the quest for new public and private funds.

*Date: 6 April 2021*

*The Chairman*