



INITIATIVES FOR THE FUTURE OF GREAT RIVERS

**Giving rivers a voice
for a shared sustainable
future**



INITIATIVES POUR L'AVENIR
DES GRANDS FLEUVES
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OF GREAT RIVERS



2021



The Yellow River (Qinghai Province, China)

The future of rivers is the future of life!

The living trace of the civilisations that peopled their banks, rivers have always shaped landscapes and local cultures and irrigated the life of the territories they cross in countless ways. They are now more than ever the reflection of the many challenges facing societies: food security, health, energy, mobility and the preservation of biodiversity.

Victims of anthropic pressure and the impacts of climate change, these ecosystems are fragile but nonetheless essential for life. Poorly managed, they become a source of conflict and

no longer vectors of solidarity and development. Despite often being in a pitiful state everywhere around the world, rivers embody solutions for tomorrow.

The future of life on Earth therefore greatly depends on the future of rivers, and more specifically on our relationship with them. Our responsibility consists in both preserving this common good that we humans exploit for various purposes (energy, transport, industry, agriculture, leisure) and reconciling their uses. So that the services rendered by

rivers benefit the greatest number and durably, while creating value there where none yet exists.

Initiatives for the Future of Great Rivers (IFGR) was born from this observation that rivers remain too neglected, at a moment when the Paris Agreement for the first time linked the climate to the oceans. It was also born from a conviction: **the need to develop river-friendly and reasoned practices to ensure a shared sustainable future.**



72 %

of the Earth's surface
is covered by water
but only 2,5% is
freshwater which is
unevenly distributed.

70 %

of freshwater
withdrawal are intended
for agriculture, 20% for
industry and
10% for drinking water
and other domestic
uses.



40 %

of the world's population
will be faced with water
shortages from now
until 2050.

(source: UN)



35 %

of the planet's wetlands,
essential for biodiversity
and drinking water
supplies, disappeared
between 1970 and 2015,
at a rate 3 times faster
than deforestation.

(source: Ramsar convention, UICN)



DISCOVERING THE WORLD'S GREAT RIVERS*

**rivers studied or represented in IFGR*

Understanding and acting to safeguard rivers

A forum of actors, IFGR mobilises every discipline and all the stakeholders to understand the complexity of interactions between human beings and their environment. Brought together through knowledge and dialogue between the world's rivers, its members contribute to providing efficient responses to the global challenges of the climate, biodiversity

and health, by giving a voice to rivers and by transforming them into fields of study and experimentation based on three major themes:

- **Governance**
- **Health** of ecosystems and human beings
- **Relationship between rivers, lands and oceans.**

An organisation in the general interest and a reference for sustainable river management, IFGR intervenes as a **lookout** to alert and spread awareness; **it acts as an international forum** for sharing knowhow and practices; **it facilitates solutions** formulated collectively, from the local to the international scale, to progress in our relationship with rivers

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I have loved rivers ever since I was a child. Would you like to know why? For at least five reasons, the five essences that every river carries within it. First of all, the river is life, since all living beings need water to live. Then, all rivers are paths; a path for goods and people. The river is also a force that is only waiting to help us turn the turbines of dams.

The river is a kingdom whose inhabitants are not only fish but legends.

Lastly, the river is a mirror. It not only reflects the sky but also the populations it passes through. Tell me what relation you maintain with your river and I'll tell you what type of society you belong to. The Ganges tells the story of India just as the Nile tells that of Egypt and the Mississippi the deep south of the United States.

Another reason to love rivers is that each river has its own character. Its colours, music, seasons, qualities and flaws. Different from each other, rivers are nonetheless faced with the same challenges: climate change and rising sea levels, pollutions, unbridled urbanisation, sharing uses, etc. IFGR's reason for being is to forge a dialogue between the world's rivers so as to better define their future, and thus our own.

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Erik Orsenna
Economist, Member
of the French Academy,
Chairman of IFGR

A plurality of experts serving rivers

Assembled around Erik Orsenna, who has chaired IFGR since it was founded, thirty experts work in close contact with local actors to propose global solutions that breakthrough barriers between disciplines, scales of time and space. Reputed experts in the sciences, the human and social sciences, gather with

the managers of river basins and hydraulic structures, professional and institutional representatives of the agricultural sector and industry. They are organized into two groups:

- **the Rivers Committee**, whose multidisciplinary positioning allows it to formulate general

recommendations and represent IFGR at different levels;

- **the Resource Experts Committee** which applies in-depth analyses to river management issues.

The Rivers Committee

Ricardo Javier Alvarez

Vice-President of the Argentinian subsidiary of the Ibero-American Institute on Maritime Law and legal coordinator of Hidrovias of Latin America - Argentina

Dominique Bérod

Head of the Earth System monitoring Division at the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) - Switzerland

Pascal Bourdeaux

Historian, Associate Professor at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (Religions of Southeast Asia) - France

Corinne Castel

Archaeologist, Director of Research at the CNRS, Director of the Franco-Syrian Archaeological Mission of Al-Rwanda, Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée - France

Daniel Dagenais

Vice-President of Operations of the Montreal Port Administration - Canada

Katherine Daniell

Professor-researcher at the Australian National University; member of the Engineers Australia - National Committee of Coastal and Ocean Engineering; specialist in water governance and participatory processes - Australia

Thierry Guimbaud

Managing Director of Voies Navigables de France (VNF) - France

Bernd Gundermann

Architect, founder and director of Urbia-Group-Think Beyond - New Zealand

Mirdad Kazanji

Director of the Pasteur Institute of French Guiana - France

Anoulak Kittikhoun

Director of the Strategy and Partnership Officer of the Mekong River Commission (MRC) - Laos

Ghislain de Marsily

Emeritus Professor at the Sorbonne University (Paris-VI-Pierre-et-Marie-Curie) and at the Ecole des Mines de Paris, member of the Academy of Sciences - France

Gilles Mulhauser

Managing Director of Water for the State of Geneva - Switzerland

Tamsir Ndiaye

Senegal River Development Organisation (OMVS), Managing Director of the Manantali Energy Company (SOGEM) - Mali

Jacqueline Nyirakamana

Specialist in cooperation for the management of cross-border water, President of the Advisory Technical Committee of the Nile (TAC-NIL) for the Ministry of the Environment - Rwanda

Erik Orsenna

Economist, author, member of the French Academy, and specialist in sustainable development, the environment, agriculture and emerging economies

Dr Papa Abdoulaye Seck

Ambassador of Senegal to the FAO and Italy, former Minister of Agriculture and Rural Equipment of the Republic of Senegal

Hamed Diane Semega

High Commissioner of the Senegal River Development Organisation (OMVS) - Senegal

James Spalding Hellmers

Councillor to the Government for energy matters, former Paraguayan Managing Director of Itaipu Binacional - Paraguay

Molly Wood

National specialist in sediments and head of the hydrological monitoring network for the US Geological Survey (USGS) - United States

Yangbo Sun

Chief of the International Cooperation Department of the Yellow River Conservation Commission, Ministry of Water Resources - China

Anne-Claire Vial

President of the Plant Institute -ARVALIS, member of The Economic, Social and Environmental Council - France

The Resource Experts Committee

Julien Clément

PhD in Anthropology

Kabiné Komara

Former Prime Minister of Guinea, member of the International Action Council

Sergio Makrakis

Director of Research, associate professor at the State University of Western Parana - Unioeste; specialist in the evaluation of the impacts of passes for migrating fish on fish populations - Brazil

Irina Ribarova

Professor at the University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy, in Sofia; expert in the integrated management of water resources and the circular economy in the sector of water - Bulgaria

Alfredo Sese

Technical secretary of Transport and Infrastructure at the Stock Exchange of Rosario - Argentina

Marie-Laure Vercambre

Managing Director of the French Water Partnership - France





Bollène power plant on the Rhône river (Vaucluse, France)

An original, international and multidisciplinary approach

IFGR is a forum where views and practises intersect with the variety of skills of international experts on rivers. The association therefore offers an original place of dialogue that is international, multidisciplinary, open to stakeholders and oriented towards action for the benefit of the world's rivers.

Thanks to **its unique capacity** to forge links between countries, uses and stakeholders, IFGR generates an integrated collective dynamic that places rivers at the heart of interactions between human beings and ecosystems.

The fact that **it provides its expertise directly where it is needed** leads to the emergence and implementation of concerted, sustainable and innovative solutions.

Four missions

- 1 **Collective reflection and interplay between different fields of knowledge** to develop a network of knowhow, experiences and practises relating to rivers.
- 2 **Dialogue and meetings** to spread awareness about the essential role of rivers strengthen community commitment and public debate.
- 3 **Advocacy and cooperation** to inform and assist decision-makers, and give them the means to act.
- 4 **Jointly develop solutions** to experiment, innovate and disseminate concrete and reproducible solutions for rivers.

Means of action

- **International sessions** bringing together the Rivers Committee, local stakeholders and other experts to explore a theme relating to a specific river,
- **Participation in international coalitions devoted to water, the climate and biodiversity** to carry the voice of the rivers,
- **Operational working groups** to take action on recommendations and support them at the highest political level,
- **Advocacy,**
- **Methodological tools** to assist political and economic decision-makers,
- **Educational activities** aimed at young audiences,
- **Active contribution to public events.**



Acting in partnerships

With CNR, the founding sponsor



“ Since 1934, when it received the concession to operate the Rhône river, CNR, a joint stock company in the general interest, has been developing an integrated river management system, unique in the world. Our concession brings together three major uses of water: electricity production, inland navigation and irrigation, that have been more recently supplemented by actions in favour of the environment for the benefit of the territories crossed

by the river. This wealth of experience as a river manager and developer, and with our sound expertise in renewable energies, has led us to launch Initiatives for the Future of Great Rivers to share the Rhône model and learn from other rivers in order to progress collectively. CNR is currently the organization's main support. ”

Elisabeth Ayrault
Chief Executive Officer

With the other international actors in water, climate and health



The World Meteorological Organization (WMO), a specialised institution of the United Nations that currently has 193 members. It is the reference institution for everything related to the state and evolution of the earth's atmosphere, its interaction with land and the oceans, the weather and the climate it generates, and the resulting distribution of water resources. IFGR has developed a 4-year collaborative partnership with the WMO.



The Tara Ocean Foundation, the leading French foundation recognised as a public utility devoted to oceans, which develops a science of the Ocean open to the greatest number. IFGR launched with the Tara Ocean Foundation and CNR the initiative “My territory makes a commitment: rivers without plastic, an ocean protected”.



The One Sustainable Health for All Foundation which acts in favour of a health accessible to all, with a borderless approach between human and animal medicine, and the environment. IFGR is a strategic partner in its *One Sustainable Health Forum* initiative to include Global Health in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



The World Water Council, a multipartite international platform whose mission is to drive actions relating to critical water problems at all levels.



The French Water Partnership, the reference platform that brings together 200 French public and private water actors and private water stakeholders, active internationally. It promotes the dissemination of their know-how and builds a collective advocacy carried in international forums, so that water becomes a priority in the sustainable development policies.



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