

## Initiatives for the Future of Great Rivers

### Annual Activity Report

#### 2021

#### Preamble

The year 2021 was again marked by the global health context linked to the Covid-19 pandemic, which had consequences on the Association's operations and projects. Its activities took place in digital format during the first semester. Nevertheless, the association was finally able to gather its members at the end of September in Switzerland for its 10th International Session and participated in events during the second part of the year.

Despite these external difficulties, IFGR has implemented and/or initiated the actions planned in its 2021/2022 plan, in line with its 2021/2025 Strategy adopted at the beginning of 2021. The Association has worked on its development, notably regarding the expansion of its community of experts and its network of influence and the diversification of its financial resources.

At a political level, significant progress has been made on the need to better associate the subjects of water, climate, biodiversity, and health within international bodies, which constitutes a strong demand of IFGR. The Association has indeed advocated a multi-disciplinary and a global approach since its creation and has based its new strategy on the ambition to make rivers experimentation areas at the crossroads of the challenges of Life. In its Marseille Manifesto, the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) called on States to significantly reduce their GHG emissions and to strengthen nature-based solutions in their commitments under the Paris Agreement. A better consideration of water resources in climate change adaptation policies also emerged at COP26 - Conference of the Parties on Climate -, which hosted a Water and Climate pavilion for the very first time.

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

#### 1. Life of the association

The Association's governance has evolved at the end of the year, following the change at the Presidency and General Management of CNR, an ex-officio member of IFGR. A **Management Board Meeting was held on November 30** to note the participation of **Laurence Borie-Bancel** on the IFGR Management Board, as the new representative of IFGR founding member CNR, and to grant active membership to Elisabeth Ayrault.

The Management Board Meeting also expressed its wish to propose to **Runa Khan**, founder and President of the Friendship association (Bangladesh) to join the Rivers Committee.

It should be noted that the 10th International Session was the occasion to formally welcome three other new active members to the Committee on Rivers:

- **Dominique Bérod**, Head of the Earth System Monitoring Department at the World Meteorological Organization (WMO),
- **Anoulak Kittikhoun**, new Chairman of the Mekong River Commission (MRC),
- **Jacqueline Nyirakamana**, from the Ministry of Environment of Rwanda.

A *Management Board was held earlier in the year (April 19)* to deliberate on the following points:

- Adoption of the activity report and the Treasurer's financial report for 2020;
- Presentation of the accounts closed for the year ended on 31/12/2020;
- Creation of The Future of Great Rivers Fund, attached to the Association;
- Launch of an operational phase of the organization of Living with rivers, the new flagship event of IFGR.

An Ordinary General Assembly, followed by an Extraordinary General Assembly, were also held on this day.

#### *Ordinary General Assembly of 19 April 2021: :*

- Presentation and approval of the 2020 activity report;
- Presentation and approval of the 2020 financial report;
- Approval of the accounts closed on 31/12/2020 and allocation of the result;
- Acknowledgement of the Auditor's report;
- Presentation and acknowledgement of the Association's 2021-2025 strategy and 2021-2022 action plan:

This strategy has 7 objectives:

- 4 strategic development objectives:

1. To alert on the dangers which endanger the rivers and the whole of the Living being
2. Reconcile uses and ecosystems to safeguard rivers
3. To support the territories in a sustainable management of rivers
4. Share with the greatest number of people on the future of rivers

- 3 strategic operational objectives :

5. To ensure the financial sustainability of IFGR's activities
6. To further weave our global network of influence and action
7. Increase our impact

For each of these objectives, indicators for 2025 and intermediate objectives for 2023 have been set, with results and means for the latter.

The first operational action plan, for 2021/2022, includes four structuring projects responding to strategic objectives n°2, 3 and 4.

- Presentation and acknowledgement of the new version of the Rules of Procedure: a Committee of Experts-Resource was created, complementary to the Rivers Committee.

### Extraordinary General Assembly of April 19, 2021:

This Assembly allowed to vote some modifications proposed by the Management Board on the Association's statute, in particular Article 14 relating to the composition of this Board.

## 2. Creation of The Future of Great Rivers Fund

The Association proceeded to the creation of The Future of Great Rivers Fund, which was published in the French Official Journal on July 20, 2021. This fund is intended to welcome private patrons into its governance to support the general interest actions of the IFGR Association as a priority. Its creation is in line with the "Increasing our impact" objective that this strategy includes. This fund should be active in 2022, with the arrival of our first private partners.

The administrators and the IFGR team have set the first objectives for 2021 in terms of prospecting. **A series of meetings** was held during the second half of the year to present the Fund and its projects to various economic players. A **presentation brochure** was produced to support this prospecting.

IFGR has also joined the **French Center for Funds and Foundations**, which brings together more than 400 members active in sponsorship and philanthropy sectors. More specifically, it participates in the French Coalition of Foundations for Climate.

## 3. Relations with third parties

**An amendment to the partnership agreement between the Association and CNR for the period 2021-2025** was signed on December 14, 2021, due to the failure to lift by January 31, 2022, the conditions precedent provided for in the text (obtaining an extension of the CNR concession and implementing the Plan5Rhône).

## ACTIONS IN THE GENERAL INTEREST - EVENTS organized directly by the Association

### 1. Discussion with Jean-Louis Chaussade et Valérie Cabanes

In June, IFGR proposed a meeting in webinar format between its members, its partners and two guest speakers: Jean-Louis Chaussade, former CEO of Suez and Administrator of the Association, and Valérie Cabanes, lawyer in international law. In this exchange gathering 80 people, our first guest talked about **the management of water scarcity**, the second about **the legal personality as a tool for rivers protection**.

## 2. 10th International Session in Geneva

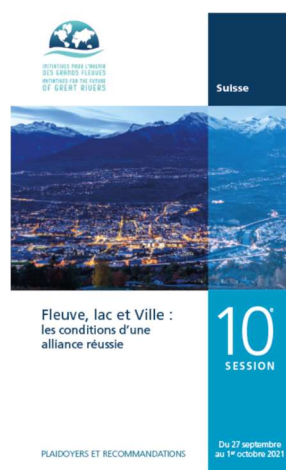


IFGR gathered its members from September 27 to October 1 in Switzerland, for its 10th International Session, after several postponements due to the health crisis.

Dedicated to the theme ***River, Lake and City: the conditions for a successful alliance***, this meeting was organized with the support of several partners: the Geneva Water Office (Office de l'eau de Genève), as the host organization, but also the cantons of Vaud and Valais, the Services Industriels de Genève, the International Commission for Protection of Geneva Lake (CIPEL), and the University of Geneva. During this session, the IFGR delegation was received at the Palais des Nations in the United Nations Office in Geneva, for the Conference of the Parties of the Water Convention.

The gala evening brought together more than 150 guests representing different international and UN organizations, Swiss and French political institutions, economic actors, and associations.

The booklet of the session was distributed in digital format in December and in paper format in January 2022.



## 3. World Conservation Congress / France

At the occasion of the IUCN World Conservation Congress, IFGR intervened several times and on different themes:

- **Local and Territorial Action Summit:** James Spalding's intervention on the redistributive model of the Itaipu Dam (*June / webinar*)



- **Official conference** *Scaling up implementation of Nature-based Solutions for water* : intervention of Erik Orsenna

- **Conference organized by IFGR, CNR, and SPYGEN** on the 30 sentinel rivers program of VIGILIFE: environmental DNA to preserve rivers biodiversity

- **Conference organized by IFGR, CNR and Tara Océan Foundation**, on the No Plastic in Rivers Charter : "From research to action: Mobilizing territories to fight against plastic

*pollution of rivers and oceans"*, in the presence of the French Secretary of State for Biodiversity Bérangère Abba.



IFGR also gathered about thirty guests for a guided tour of the photo exhibition *Amer - la mer notre bien commun en danger*, by the Argos collective.

The team also met the institutional actors of the Argens coastal river, in the Var, to understand the problems of biodiversity preservation and fight against floods in this basin.

## 4. Communication

- **Major media coverage:**

- *Opinion column in LeMonde.fr, in Abécédaire de la Ville: "Water management: the experiences of the first urban civilizations are a source of inspiration for thinking about the city of tomorrow" co-signed by Corinne Castel and Bernd Gundermann, members of IFGR, on March 22, on the occasion of World Water Day*
- *UN Info Geneva podcast: interview with Erik Orsenna, November 3, on the occasion of COP26*
- *3-page dossier "Au milieu de nos vies coulent les fleuves" (In the middle of our lives, rivers flow) in the Journal des Enfants, November 18*
- *The RTS broadcast "Tout un monde", a report and set on LemanBleuTV, an article in the Dauphiné libéré, on the occasion of Switzerland International Session.*

➡ *Press coverage to be found in the [IFGR press review](#)*

- **Redesigning of our website and institutional brochure** to reorient the contents according to the new strategy and to highlight the actions implemented, in addition to the advocacy carried out by IFGR.
- **Infographics:** 10 infographics have been created to give key figures on water resources and rivers in the world. Available on our website, they have also been adapted for social networks and supplemented with reading tips for articles produced by IFGR.



- **MOOC<sup>1</sup>: contribution to two MOOCs** developed by PortCityFutures, a research program of the University of Delft (Netherlands) on port cities. Bernd Gundermann and Daniel Dagenais participated in the form of an interview.
- **Newsletter "Le climat des fleuves":** during the year 2021, 4 issues of the quarterly newsletter "The River's Mood" (March, June, September, December) were distributed in French and English to a qualified file of more than 1800 contacts. The newsletter includes a new section "Like N'Share".

<sup>1</sup> (Re)Imagining Port Cities: Understanding Space, Society and Culture / Water Works: Activating Heritage for Sustainable Development



### A few figures:

**Linked-in:** 1,241 subscribers (+ 38% compared to 2020)

**Twitter:** 981 followers (+ 14% compared to 2020)

**Website:** 41,072 users in 2021 for 70,000 views for the French version (down from 2020 when all communication was done online); 5,984 users and 10,495 page views for the English version. The most consulted section remains "About Rivers".

## ACTIONS IN THE GENERAL INTEREST - PROJECTS organized with the association's partners

### 1. No Plastic in Rivers Charter



IFGR continued to deploy the No Plastic in Rivers initiative with **Tara Océan Foundation and CNR**. Launched in 2020 at the time of municipal and metropolitan elections, the initiative is structured around a charter called *My territory is committed: plastic-free river, protected ocean* (Mon territoire s'engage : rivière et fleuve sans plastique, océan protégé), through which elected officials commit to implementing several of 15 measures presented in the charter.

In 2021, the partners focused their efforts on structuring the project, with the establishment of a **steering committee** bringing together the French Ministry of Ecological Transition, ADEME, VNF and the associations of elected officials AMF and APVF.

The second objective was **to expand the community of signatories**, which reached 170 at the end of the year (+40), and to drive it. An initial assessment of the undertaken actions was carried out with the first signatory municipalities in the first quarter. Communication actions were carried out to raise awareness on the charter and encourage signatories:

- Participation in the Assises des Petites Villes de France (APVF) and the Congrès des Maires de France (Congress of French Mayors), with a stand and a video,
- Conference at the World Nature Congress in Marseille, with the City of Marseille's signature
- New visual identity and redesign of the dedicated website, integrating two new sections: "Toolbox" for signatories and "Solutions for territories", which presents the actions implemented by the signatories.

The third objective is **to support the signatories in the implementation of the charter**, initially by providing them with adequate tools. The structure does not currently allow us to offer training-type services. In 2021, Tara Ocean Foundation has made available :

- An educational kit, thanks to a call for expressions of interest,
- A methodological guide: *The guide of good practices to fight against plastic pollution*.

IFGR has been a strong contributor to the emergence and animation of this project and will continue its commitment to its development in 2022.

➡ <https://www.fleuve-sans-plastique.fr/>

## 2. Preparatory work for other projects

IFGR initiated a collaboration with **Fondation de la Mer** to **extend their Ocean framework to rivers**. This reference framework, launched in 2020, allows companies to become aware of, better understand, and monitor the impacts of their activities on the Ocean, in line with the UN Agenda 2030's MDG 14 (Ocean). The ambition is to enrich it by adding indicators for MDG6 (water). The Boston Consulting Group has accompanied the two organizations in the design of this new version of the benchmark, in which IFGR members have been strongly involved.

In addition, following the validation of the concept by the Board of Directors, the IFGR team launched the preparation of the ***Living with rivers*** project, an international mobilization for rivers in the form of a biennial event: setting up of a steering committee, registration of the brand, creation of a visual identity, production of the first audio-visual aids (9 films). A collaboration has been established with the **Musée des Confluences in Lyon**, to host this event and to design the temporary exhibition "Nous, les fleuves". These two events will take place in the last quarter of 2022.

## PARTICIPATION IN THIRD PARTIES EVENT

### 1. United Nations Conference



As part of the 4-year partnership with the World Meteorological Organization at the beginning of 2021, a presentation was organized with IFGR members in April.

Subsequently, Erik Orsenna made a video presentation at two United Nations conferences:

- During the opening session of the *workshop on strengthening resilience to climate change* coordinated by the UNECE (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe - Secretariat of the Water Convention) in March,
- At the UN World Data Forum, on the session *Ensuring the future of sustainable water data--for citizens, scientists and policymakers*, in October.

### 2. Paris Photo exhibition on the Rhône River / Paris

IFGR was associated by CNR to the exhibition of Camille Moirenc's photographs: *Faces of the Rhône*, on the gates of the Jardin du Luxembourg, in Paris, from March 13 to July 14.



### 3. Agir pour le Vivant / Arles



IFGR renewed its participation in the event launched by Actes Sud in Arles: Agir pour le Vivant in the framework of the partnership established by CNR. Two representatives of the Organization for the Development of the Senegal River (OMVS), member of IFGR, participated in the residency organized by AFD during the week: Acting for the Living in Africa.

### 4. World Impact Summit / Bordeaux



IFGR was a partner of the World Impact Summit, an international summit of solutions for the planet, organized on December 2 and 3. This edition made water its major cause.

Marie-Cécile Grisard participated in the workshop: *Nature-based solutions: how can ecosystem regeneration increase the resilience of territories?*

➞ [Replay here](#)

## PARTICIPATION TO INTERNATIONAL COALITIONS

IFGR participates in various national and international coalitions to carry the voice of rivers and make IFGR a link between climate / water / biodiversity and health issues.

In 2021, it has extended its presence to:

- **The international [Water and Climate](#) coalition**, as part of its partnership with the WMO-World Meteorological Organization, which provides the secretariat.
- **The [IUCN-International Union for Conservation of Nature](#)**, following the acceptance of its membership in September.

IFGR has also applied to be recognized as an association member of UNESCO (expected response by April 2022).

The Association continued its involvement in other coalitions:

- **Health:** participation in the Strategic Partners Committee of OSH Forum ([One Sustainable Health Forum](#)) and participation of Irina Ribarova and Mirdad Kazanji, IFGR members, to two international working groups.
- **Biodiversity:** participation in the [Vigilife alliance](#), which was officially launched at the IUCN congress. IFGR will be more particularly associated with the Sentinel Rivers program (partnership agreement planned for 2022). IFGR contributed to the editorial committee of the first issue of Vigilife magazine.
- **Water:** participation in two working groups of the French Water Partnership.



## DONATIONS RECEIVED

IFGR received on December 18, 2020, a donation provided by CNR for the fiscal year 2021, as part of the 2021-2025 partnership agreement signed between CNR and IFGR on December 14, 2020.

The Association also received a total of €6,198 in membership fees from its members, an amount that is significantly higher than the previous year. This was made possible by the conditioning of the participation to the session to the payment of its contribution and the reminder by some members of their contribution for the year 2020.

The Association has kept its budget under control in 2021. The balance of 37,041.07 € could be added to the reserve fund.

## POST-CLOSE EVENTS

During the Management Board on November 30, 2021, it was decided that the donation paid by CNR to the Association for 2022 (€500,000) would not be paid at the beginning of the year, as the two conditions precedent provided for in the agreement (obtaining an extension of the CNR concession and implementing the Plan5Rhône) were still valid. The directors have asked the General Secretariat to control expenses.

*Activity report duly approved by resolution of the Ordinary General Meeting of April 29, 2022.*

*Date : June 2, 2022*



*The Chairman  
Mr. Erik Orsenna*