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International Geographical Union
Union Géographique Internationale

COMMUNICATION NETWORK

We want to establish a worldwide network of scientists (not only geographers, also archaeologists, ecologists, historians, environmentalists etc.) who are interested in the topics and aims of this IGU-commission. Please contact us.

COMMISSION ON

ARID LANDS, HUMANKIND AND ENVIRONMENT

OBJECTIVES

The **International Geographical Union** has the following aims:

1. to promote the study of geographical problems;
2. to initiate and co-ordinate geographical research requiring international co-operation and to promote its scientific discussion and publication;
3. to provide for the participation of geographers in the work of relevant international organizations;
4. to facilitate the collection and diffusion of geographical data and documentation in and between all member countries;
5. to promote International Geographical Congresses, regional conferences and specialized symposia related to the objectives of the Union;
6. to participate in any other appropriate form of international co-operation with the object of advancing the study and application of geography;
7. to promote international standardization or compatibility of methods, nomenclature, and symbols employed in geography.

The International Geographical Union adheres to the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) and the International Social Science Council (ISSC) and recognizes them as co-ordinating bodies for the international organization of science.

COMMISSION ON

ARID LANDS, HUMANKIND AND ENVIRONMENT

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Aims

Arid Lands cover about 1/3 of the world area and comprise of a belt extending from central and western Asia to northern Africa, Australia, southern Africa, western American, Peru and Atacama.

Water resources are very scarce due to three factors:

- Firstly, most of the surface water comes from adjacent wet regions.
- Secondly, the (under)ground water is mostly fossil and not renewable.
- Thirdly, rainfall is often hazardous.



After the rain in the **Sturt Stony Desert**, Australia (Photo: O. Bubenzer)

Arid regions, particularly in Africa, might have seen the first step of mankind. Therefore, they lend themselves to geoarchaeological investigations to reconstruct the interaction of human and environment.

Today, the human impact differs among the arid land regions according to the cultural levels. Population pressure is very high in the arid regions of the Old World, while it is not so in the New World. For example, urban growth has contributed greatly to the problems of croplands. In general, human impact has exhausted local water resources.

Development planning in several countries of the arid regions does not take into consideration liabilities of water shortage by initiating agricultural projects or digging water wells in the rangeland causing much damage to the fragile ecosystem.

These major aspects among others support the suggestion of establishing an IGU commission for „Arid Lands, Humankind, and Environment“ that wants to:

- Promote the study of geographical problems in Arid Lands.
- Monitor human and environmental changes in Arid Lands.
- Build a database for these works related to the arid lands to facilitate and promote future research.
- Support comprehensive fieldwork in arid regions.
- Develop academic and research networks and cooperate with other projects (e.g. DesertNet, UNCCD, ACACIA, IGCP 500, INQUA).
- Promote standardization and compatibility of methods, nomenclature and symbols employed by geographers and other interrelated disciplines.
- Organise meetings to bring together geographers; especially to re-establish better interaction with colleagues in the Arab world those who not participated in the IGU much up until now.

