

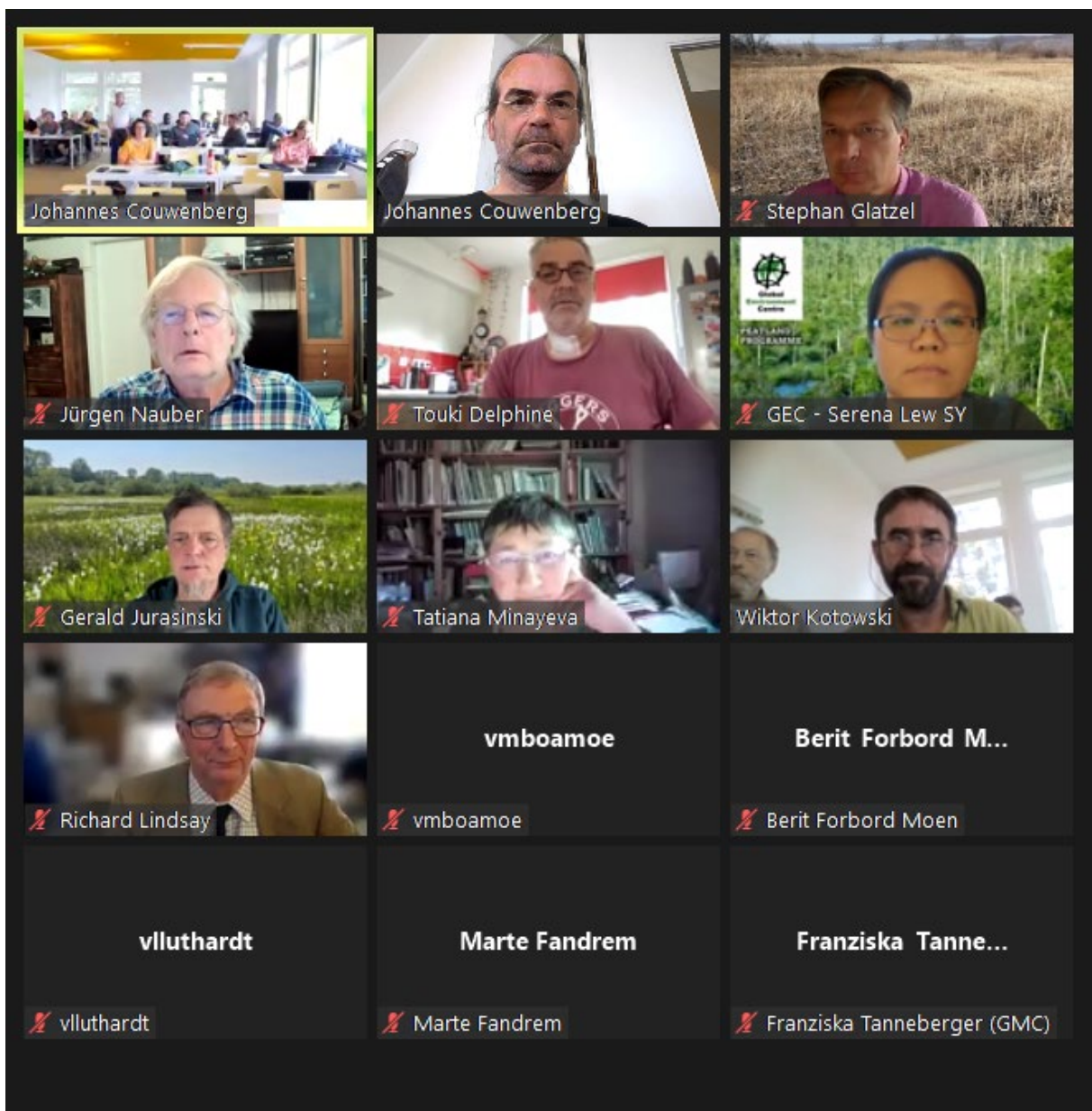
# IMCG General Assembly 2024

04.08.2024, Greifswald, Institute of Botany and Landscape Ecology, University of Greifswald, 9:00-13:00

## Participants:

On site: *Olivia Bragg, Rob Stoneman, Hans Joosten, John Couwenberg, Jan Peters, André Jansen, Miguel Geraldès, Shane Grundy, Ab Grootjans, Wiktor Kotowski, Henk Everts, Amelie Hünnebeck-Wells, Angeline Bedoulla, Leszek Wołejko, Alma Wołejko, Bettina Holsten, Michael Trepel, Bastien Amez-Droz, Andreas Grünig, Alex Cobb, Mara Pakalne, Leonard Akwany, Jean Rousselot, Jason Leroux, Rene Dommain, Wendelin Wichtmann, Agata Klimkowska, Lydia Schumacher, Marte Fandrem, Charuni Jayasekara, Rahel Bauerdick, Franziska Tanneberger (minute taker)*

Online: *Berit and Asbjørn Moen, Serena Lew, Gerald Jurasinski, Jürgen Nauber, Stephan Glatzel, Tatiana Minayeva, Jeroen Swinkels, Vera Luthardt*



## 1. Greetings by the Mayor of Greifswald, Dr. Stefan Faßbinder

## 2. Opening and Welcome (Rob)

Following art. 13.1 of the IMCG constitution, Rob Stoneman acts as chairperson of the General Assembly (GA). The Chairman asked for objections to the agenda and/or the minutes of the last minutes of the General Assembly of March 23, 2022 in Chrissiesmeer, South Africa, both sent out on Monday 29.07.2024. There were no objections, on site and online. Agenda and minutes were adopted. There is a request to all participants of the Field Symposium to submit short contributions (incl. pictures) of their experiences and impressions to the IMCG Bulletin: [joosten@uni-greifswald.de](mailto:joosten@uni-greifswald.de)

## 3. Biennial report (2022-2024) on the state of affairs in the IMCG and on its policy (Hans + others)

### General organisation

At the GA in Chrissiesmeer 2022 the following 15 persons were confirmed as Main Board members:

- Jacolette Adam
- Olivia Bragg
- Zhao-Jun Bu
- Marte Fandrem
- Ab Grootjans
- Samantha Grover
- Piet-Louis Grundling
- Hans Joosten
- Wiktor Kotowski
- Tatiana Minayeva
- Faizal Parish
- Line Rochefort
- Rob Stoneman
- Franziska Tanneberger
- Adriana Urciuolo
- Jean Rousselot was later coopted by the Main Board as 16th MB member

The Main Board elected the following Executive Committee:

- Rob Stoneman (chair)
- Hans Joosten – Secr.-General (supported by Jan Peters, John Couwenberg and Franziska Tanneberger)
- Jean Rousselot – treasurer
- Jacolette Adam – member
- Adriana Urciuolo – member

Key activities include:

- Field Symposia: South Africa/Eswatini (2022), Germany (2024)
- Website [www.imcg.net](http://www.imcg.net): regularly updated and maintained by Michael Trepel (applause)
- Mires and Peat journal: Editor-in-Chief: Olivia Bragg, meanwhile being tranfered to Gerald Jurasinski (applause)
- IMCG Bulletin: production by Hans Joosten, distribution by Michael Trepel (applause)
- Membership administration by Claire Boismenu & Line Rochefort (applause)
- European Habitat Forum EHF: IMCG Representation by Rudy van Diggelen

### IMCG Field Symposia

- South Africa and Eswatini 2022: Field Symposium with 38 participants (with last minute changes because of Covid and Ukraine war), Conference and General Assembly in Chrissiesmeer. Organisation: Piet-Louis Grundling, Simone Koert, Heinz Beckedahl, Lulu van Rooyen, Jacolette Adam

- Germany 2024: Field Symposium with 40 participants, General Assembly in Greifswald. Organisation: Amelie Hünnebeck-Wells, Jan Peters, Michael Trepel, Bettina Holsten, Laurentiu Constantin, Jenny Hammerich, John Couwenberg, Jan Sliva, Johannes Kollmann, Matthias Drösler, Susanne Abel → a big thank you to Amelie and Michael (long applause) and also to Susanne who was very effective in the beginning but could not join the excursion (applause)

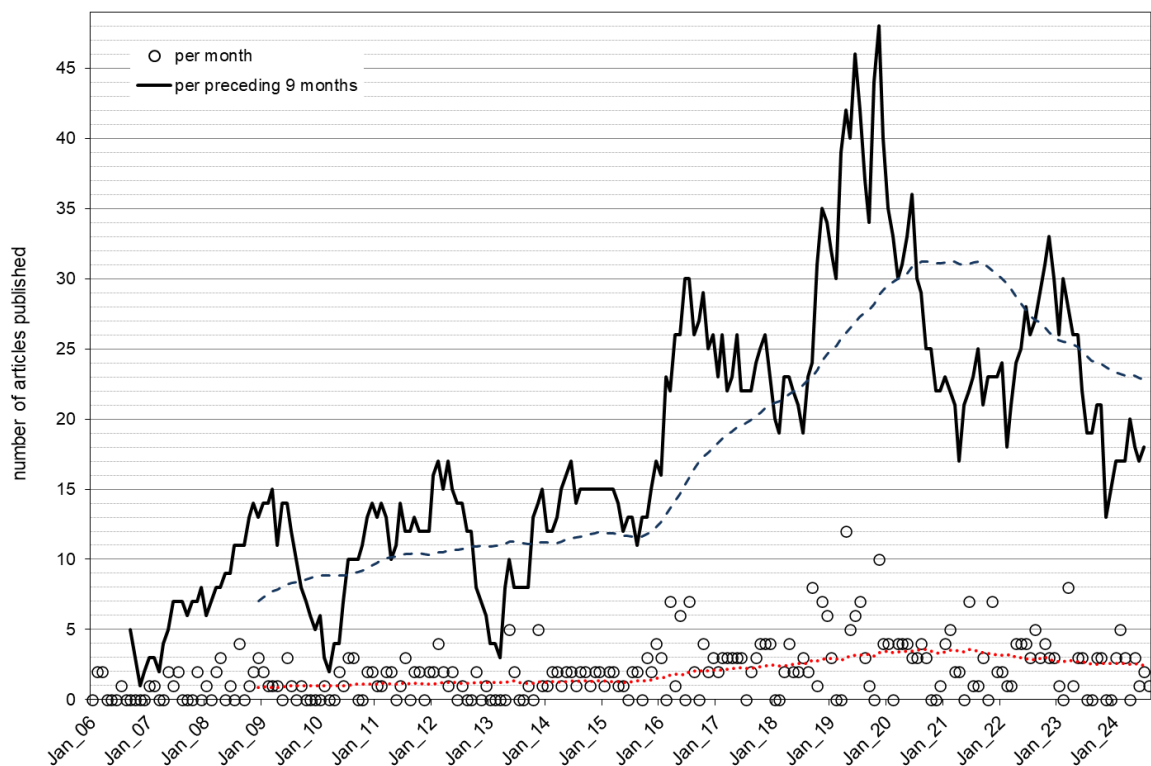
#### Other congresses and papers

- Participation in organization of other congresses and symposia: e.g. Power to the Peatlands conference in Antwerp (with declaration/resolution)
- Support of publications, policy briefs and open letters: e.g. on EU Nature Restoration Law

#### Mires & Peat (by Olivia Bragg)

- Editor-in-Chief (retiring): Olivia Bragg
- Deputy Editor-in-Chief: Sabine Jordan
- Article Editors: Dicky Clymo, Bartek Glina, Ab Grootjans, Mark Harrison, Colin McCarter and Jonathan Price
- Website administrator: Michael Trepel
- Many IMCG members are Associate Editors, authors and peer reviewers
- Olivia produces every year an extensive report
- Editor-in-Chief (incoming): Gerald Jurasinski
- Olivia is stopping as EIC and transferring the tasks to Gerald Jurasinski

Mires and Peat (ISSN 1819-754X) Publication Rate, January 2006 to July 2024



- The current (2023) Journal Impact Factors (JIFs), published in mid-2024, are 1.400 (2-year) and 1.600 (5-year). The (2-year) 2022 JIF was disappointing but maybe the upward trend is back? To improve, it is important to increase citations.

- Olivia reflected on the development of the journal and stated that this was her last report as Editor-in-Chief to the General Assembly. The audience applauded for a long time.

#### IMCG Bulletin (by Hans)

- In the past years, the Bulletin appeared less and less frequent, and with more pages:
  - 2013 - 2016 monthly (12 issues/yr)
  - 2017: 9 issues with 238 p.
  - 2018: 7 issues with 294 p.
  - 2019: 6 issues with 387 p.
  - 2020: 0 issues (6 unpublished in pipeline, 'Corona deep'... )
  - 2021: 3 issues and 1 annex with 304 p. (3 in pipeline, 'Corona deep'... )
  - 2022: 1 issue: 59 p. ('Ukraine' issue)
- Since then: Increasing news and increasing work load prevented finalization of Bulletins (the hope that Hans' retirement would bring more time did not materialize)
- Attempts to simplify and streamline the Bulletin (less content, more hyperlinks, also full-web-based format) with support of IUCN UK did until now not succeed
- Selection of the items and publications is the bottleneck
- Concept of Bulletin (and other outreach) has to be reconsidered
- This is a task for new Main Board: How to organise regular communication with the membership and the outside world?
- Ideas/proposals of the General Assembly? Alex Cobb proposes to think about more pre-prints in Mires and Peat, including syntheses published annually. Rob Stoneman confirms that the potential support of IUCN UK Peatland Programme still stands. Richard Lindsay and Serena Lew mention regional newsletter that are good examples and could be linked to. Wiktor Kotowski proposed to apply modern ways of communication to communicate with members. Tatiana suggests to get back to a newsletter. Richard Lindsay stresses to stratify the information and present short pieces that you may click on to continue reading. Marte suggests to explore options e.g. with platforms like Slack. Franziska underlines that it is useful to split between quick, dynamic communication with members (employing 'modern technology') and compilation of information as regional syntheses by IMCG members (with space for even more news and activities on peatlands in future years!). Alex Cobb suggests to explore a Wiki format – Gerald confirms that it is a good idea.

#### Membership (presented by Hans)

No actual and exact overview of membership exists. We are already 2 years updating the membership list, as many members have not communicated changes in affiliation and email addresses. General impression: membership number has not changed since 2021 (> 700 members, ~ 70 countries – more or less right).

IMCG Regions	Members & supporters			countries		
	2016	2018	2021	2016	2018	2021
Africa	72	76	104	11	11	14
Asia (excl. RF)	23	30	35	7	8	9
Australia/Oceania	29	28	30	2	2	2
Europe (excl. RF)	401	439	491	33	33	34
Russian Federation	23	22	21	1	1	1
North America	45	47	54	2	2	2
Central America / Caribbean	1	1	1	1	1	1
South America	12	15	15	5	5	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>658</b>	<b>751</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>68</b>

The audience remembered the deceased members in 2022-2024, including:

- Rauno Ruuhijärvi (1930-2022)
- Klaus Dierssen (1948-2022)
- Andrey Sirin (1956-2023)

#### Highlights in 2022-2024

- Letter to support peatland conservationists of APB in court in Belarus (2022)
- Letter of Concern on Chilean peatlands (2022)
- Various ways of support to Viktor Fenchuk, who was imprisoned in Belarus
- Collaboration with Chilean artists on Biennale Venice and Venice Agreement
- Global Peatlands Assessment (2022)
- Letter of Concern on amber mining in Ukraine (2023)
- Analysis of Ramsar sites, growing number but Cinderella still in the kitchen
- Mooratlas/Peatland Atlas - 150,000 copies distributed in German
- Power to the Peatlands conference with 600 participants in Antwerp and strong conference resolution (2023), various events at UNFCCC COPs
- Attention growing: German president Steinmeyer and UK King Charles visited German exhibition on peatland conservation and paludiculture
- Joint letters on EU Nature Resolution Law to EU Commission (2022) and Parliament (2023)
- Line Rochefort was awarded an honorary doctorate in agriculture and forestry from the University of Finland (2024)
- GEC has just been named a recipient of Sabah's coveted 2023 Conservation Partner Award
- Flow country is first peatland to be designated by UNESCO as World Heritage site
- Several people commented – Serena mentions a webinar on GPA next week, Richard stresses that Ramsar designations are still often neglecting peatlands, Richard also adds that the Virtual Pavilion is continued at UNFCCC COPs, Wiktor announces that the Polish government will submit the application for Rospuda Valley as a Ramsar site

Rob concluded that there was an astonishing set of activities, that the missing Bulletin seems not have affected it – and that IMCG is an amorphous and successful network. He thanked everybody involved, and in particular Hans (long applause).

#### **4. Balance sheet and the statement of profit and loss (by Jean Rousselot)**

In 2022 - 2023 Jean took over from Francis Muller. Expenses are mainly the EHF contribution (payments in Feb 2024 of 2022 and 2023 fees – each 164€) and banking costs. The account was used

for the 2024 field trip. Substantial finance flow goes via self-financing and via (bi- and multilateral) donations. At the General Assembly of 2022 many members expressed their doubt that IMCG should adopt a membership fee and pointed at practical considerations. The decision was handed over to the MB. The MB decided not to implement membership fee, but to stimulate gifts.

2022

Budget 01.01.2022 :	4 270,56 €	
Part sociale :	45,75 €	
	Out	In
Banking costs	95,27 €	- €
Bank interest		0,15 €
Budget 31.12.2022 :	4 175,44 €	
Part sociale :	45,75 €	

2023

Budget 01.01.2023 :	4 175,44 €	
Part sociale :	45,75 €	
	Out	In
Banking costs	74,79 €	- €
Bank interest	- €	0,46 €
Budget 31.12.2023 :	4 101,11 €	
Part sociale :	45,75 €	

There were no questions to the treasurer. The General Assembly discharged the treasurer by acclamation.

## 5. Election of the Main Board

Following art. 9.7 of the constitution and the decision of the IMCG Main Board, one third of the current Main Board membership has stepped down: Ab Grootjans, Faizal Parish, Hans Joosten, Olivia Bragg, Piet-Louis Grundling and Tatiana Minayeva. Rob stressed that all these names are really big names in the peatland world and that we are all most grateful for their work. This was followed by a long applause.

Nominations could have been received until July 22. The following persons have been nominated:

- Agata Klimkowska
- André Jansen
- Eeva-Stiina Tuittila
- Serena Lew Siew Yan
- Stephan Glatzel.

As by July 22, 2024, exactly 5 persons were nominated for the 5 vacant Main Board positions, and in accordance with article 9.1 of the constitution, no voting is necessary and all candidates are included in the new Main Board. The GA confirms the new Main Board and thanks the old MB, especially the departing MB members Ab, Faizal, Hans, Piet-Louis, Olivia and Tatiana. The new MB will convene (hybrid) directly after the GA and will start the procedure to elect the Executive Committee, incl. the chair, from among its members.

## 6. Nomination of Honorary Life members

According to the IMCG Constitution: „4.7. Honorary members shall be those individuals who have been nominated as such by the Main Board by reason of their exceptional merits to the objects of the Society, and who have been granted the status of honorary member by the General Assembly, and who have accepted this status.“

The Main Board proposed to nominate Andreas Grünig and Asbjørn Moen as honorary members. This proposal was adopted by acclamation by the General Assembly.

### Andreas Grünig (appreciation given by Tatiana Minayeva)

We would like to propose to the assembly that Andreas Grünig from Switzerland be made an IMCG honorary member. There are many reasons for this recommendation.

Firstly, Andreas is one of the pioneers of mire conservation in Switzerland. Andreas studied geobotany at ETH Zurich. His first research project concerned the decline of reedbeds along the shoreline of Lake Constance and other Swiss lakes. These studies were based on the landscape approach and functional vision and proposed smart solutions, which we now call “nature-based solutions,” to water management authorities. It is worth looking at the outcomes to learn integrative thinking.

*Klötzli, F. und A. Grünig (1976): Seeufer vegetation als Bioindikator. — Daten und Dokumente zum Umweltschutz 19, S. 109 – 131*

*Grünig, A. (1978): Die Vegetationsentwicklung im Flachseegebiet. Jber. Stiftg. Reusstal 1977, 16-23.*

The first national inventory of raised bogs and transition mires in Switzerland was a huge step towards mire conservation in Switzerland. Andreas, together with Luca Vetterli and Otto Wildi, designed and carried out the inventory in the early 1980s on behalf of the WWF and today's Pro Natura. The first version with 486 large scale maps was published in 1984, and the final report was published in 1986.

*Grünig, A., Vetterli, L., Wildi, O. (1984): Inventar der Hoch- und Übergangsmoore der Schweiz. Unveröffentlicht, etwa 2100 S., Polykopien, 489 Kärtchen 1:25 000, deponiert: Eidg. Anstalt für das forstliche Versuchswesen, 8903 Birmensdorf.*

*Grünig, A., Vetterli, L., Wildi, O. (1986): Die Hoch- und Übergangsmoore der Schweiz, Eidgenössische Anstalt für das forstliche Versuchswesen, Berichte Nr. 281, Birmensdorf.*

The high quality of this report, detailed information, and clear illustrative material, including a description of the connection to Swiss culture and history, did not allow the authority to reject proposals for mire conservation. This serves as a great example of how a high-quality national inventory can provide a solid background for decision-making. It is definitely worth taking a look at this report. And remarkable is that this experience had been institutionalised. Andreas became a head of the Mire Protection Advisory Centre (KOSMOS) at the Swiss Federal Research Institute WSL. Having once had the opportunity to speak for half an hour with the responsible environment minister, Cotti, he managed to convince him that Switzerland needs 80 mire landscapes and not just 3 or 4, as the government first envisaged.

In the 1990s, he developed the concept and introduced a large national monitoring programme for Swiss mires based on remote sensing and vegetation relevés, the so called "Wirkungskontrolle Moorschutz Schweiz" which was carried out until 2011. In support of this programme, together with Michael Steiner, he developed a series of educational kits and materials in German that are of high value and a source of information and inspiration until now. The brochures described the hydrological types of Swiss peatlands, their functions, land uses, and management practices. These publications help to support practitioners with basic knowledge.

Andreas also prepared numerous pieces of expertise on mires for the state and the cantons. He was involved in several peatland restoration projects such as the "Gamperfin bog restoration" and in the fens and bogs on the Glaubenberg. The report on the Gamperfin bog restoration could be, on its own, the guidelines for peatland restoration. The approach is to consider peatland as a living entity, and simply address it with the questions:

- Where are you from?
- Who are you?
- What were you supposed to become?
- What has become of you?

Andreas is passionate about the history of mires and peat extraction in Switzerland. Andreas is an open book when it comes to mires, and he can tell the origin and history of every bog and fen of Switzerland and not only there.

What does it mean for IMCG? Why am I coming up with this proposal?

Andreas joined IMCG not from the beginning but from his first years of membership; he provided significant input to this organisation. In 1992, he organised, together with Margrit von Euw, the IMCG Symposium in Switzerland. All the participants still remember this fantastic trip, during which they visited bogs and fens from the Jura mountains to the Alps and the Swiss Plateau, and discussed the problems these peatlands were facing. This trip gave inspiration to many participants that knowledge could bring to political decisions and real actions. The book "Mires and Man. Mire Conservation in a densely populated country – the Swiss Experience" was written on this occasion and published 2 years later. It included an excursion guide and compiled the proceedings of the 5<sup>th</sup> IMCG field symposium. But not only this. The book contains resolutions of IMCG Symposiums 1990 and 1992 and the short history of IMCG from 1983 and for the following 10 years. This part of the book, together with the article by Richard Lindsay on the IMCG web page, is a valuable source of information. Strongly recommended. Andreas is a living encyclopaedia, and during all the IMCG excursions in which he participated (and that is a lot), he transferred his brilliant knowledge to the members worldwide very gently and quietly. Andreas has dedicated his entire life to the knowledge of bogs and fens, especially in Switzerland. His passion, even addiction, to mires went so far that he had to create a "mini bog" in his own garden! Considering all the above, we ask you today to nominate Andreas Grünig as an honorary member of the IMCG.

Asbjørn Moen (appreciation given by Richard Lindsay)

The IMCG has only one true knight. While it has had many legendary nights, including one occasion where it was in danger of being collectively thrown from a sleeper train at dead of night in the middle of Scotland, and another when it was threatened with being collectively ejected into the night from a hotel in Switzerland, the IMCG has only one ceremonially appointed knight conferred by a monarch. In 2014 Asbjørn Moen was appointed Knight 1st Class of the Royal Norwegian Order of St. Olav by His Majesty Harald, King of Norway. The Order of St. Olav is awarded to individuals for remarkable accomplishments on behalf of the country and humanity – and Asbjørn fully merits that honour.

I first met Asbjørn in Finland in 1983, when Seppo Eerola invited a group of peatland specialists to meet in the Finnish mires and discuss the challenges of peatland classification. It was a remarkable gathering, ranging from such legendary figures as Hugo Sjörs, Nils Malmer, Kamil Rybnicek, Klaus Dierssen, Steve Zoltai as well as Seppo himself, to those of us who were perhaps closer to being peatland apprentices. My first question on meeting Asbjørn was whether his brain extended all the way up into his hat. My second thought was that it must do because he knew so much about mires, mire species and mire conservation issues. That meeting in Finland was the birthplace of the IMCG, thanks to Michael Steiner and the urging of Hugo Sjörs, and although we didn't know it at the time it was also the birthplace of the legendary IMCG anthem 'Oulanka-jokki' – created and performed by Asbjørn, at Viking volume and usually accompanied by the Viking laugh – to celebrate the Oulanka

River in Kuusamo National Park where we stayed for some days. Its joy lies in its simplicity. It may have upwards of 100 verses but only two words – Oulanka and jokki. So easy to remember even after several beers in the sauna.

When he is not being a wild Viking, I quickly discovered that Asbjørn is the kindest, most generous of teachers, always willing to share his huge store of knowledge while also ready to engage in the most earnest and in-depth discussions about all things mire-related and indeed ecology and nature conservation more broadly. He was a key part of the discussions in 1984 when Michael Steiner brought several of us together in Austria to establish the IMCG, and has continued to play a key role in expanding the IMCG's knowledge-base as well as helping to drive the IMCG forward into the internationally-recognised organisation it is today. I have seen for myself how he has helped IMCG members in Austria, Sweden, Ireland, Switzerland, Russia, Latvia, Tierra del Fuego and myself in the UK. The IMCG Field Symposium he organised together with Kjell Ivar Flatberg in effect launched the IMCG beyond Europe and onto the global stage, with the Trondheim Declaration causing policy-makers and politicians around the world to sit up and begin to take notice of mires and their significance.

His own magisterial work – the Vegetation Atlas of Norway – is a benchmark, a very high benchmark, for how the natural environment of a nation should be described and displayed to both specialists and the wider public. It explains his vegetation zones, sections and ecological regions with a clarity that most of us can only hope to emulate, while also displaying his immense ecological knowledge and understanding, as well as making clear that he understands the realities of the world that we live in and have an impact on.

Not content with that, he then embarked on the massive joint venture with Hans and Franziska to complete the work originally begun by Micke Löfroth to produce a publication describing the extent, diversity and current condition of Europe's peatlands. The resulting massive tome is now the definitive bible of peatland across the entire continent of Europe, as well as providing much valuable guidance to a wider readership about mire classification, function and conservation, while Asbjørn himself of course also co-authored the chapter on the mires and peatlands of Norway.

Asbjørn has immense powers of concentration and has enormous attention to detail, but he is also a Viking, and as well as that Viking laugh it was clear when we travelled by small boat to the island of Mykselma in the Solovyetski Archipelago that he was happy on the water – and of course natural mires are mostly water too, so his affinity with water is clear. But while many – perhaps most – people know of his song-writing abilities, perhaps fewer people have noticed that he has also created a dance for the bogs – although not all of his audience has been as appreciative as he might have hoped...

The other thing that was brought home to me while sorting through my slides of Asbjørn is that he is actually something of a giant of a man. I realised that if I simply scanned along the image looking for a head that stood above the others, it was likely to be Asbjørn – or Hans. The rest of us are fortunate indeed to be able to echo that observation by another knight of the realm, Sir Isaac Newton, that we have been able to see further by standing on the shoulders of giants.

I discovered recently that I have unexpected kinship with Asbjørn because a DNA ancestry test revealed that my DNA is 9% Norwegian. More importantly, however, I am proud to call him my friend and mentor – and I am sure that this is true for a great many other IMCG members. It is therefore entirely fitting that Asbjørn should be awarded Honorary Life Membership of the IMCG in recognition for everything that he has done for mires, for the IMCG, and for the wider natural environment. He is the IMCG's one true knight.

## **7. Conference resolutions**

Draft resolutions were presented and discussed.

Resolution for Eswatini on mining threats for unique peatland (Jason)

→ a Letter of Concern would be better, as threats are not yet direct

Resolution for EU on the future of EU peatlands in the context of Nature Restoration Law (NRL) combined with Life programme (Wiktor)

It was a tight EU decision, but peatlands are now included in the NRL. Only with minimum requirements, but they are there. It may be a good move to express that it is good that peatlands are there, and highlight chances, also based on the impressions during the excursion. Wiktor read the text of the draft resolution. Franziska stressed that Point 2 should be changed to “phased out during the next funding period”, as stopping without earlier notification is likely to put many farms on the verge of financial collapse. Richard Lindsay and Franziska proposed to add 1 sentence on advice and support to farmers to change to wet agriculture. Both proposals were accepted. The modified draft resolution was supported by everybody in the room and online, no attendee abstained or rejected it.

Resolution on amber mining and mire protection in Polessia, Ukraine (Olga)

Hans read the draft resolution. Rob explained that raising an issue from local and regional issue to an international issue can be very helpful. Agata suggest to explain better why amber extraction is done and is harmful to peatlands. Wiktor advices to remove point 6, as it is not addressing the government. Tatiana suggests that Olga fills the form for mires under threat on IMCG website. The modified draft resolution was supported by everybody in the room and online, no attendee abstained or rejected it.

Resolution on protection of Prühlmoos in Bavaria

→ better to be addressed as a Letter of Concern

## **8. Next venues**

There are proposals for the next years, each briefly explained by the respective member, field Symposia (with General Assembly, 2026, 2028, ...).

- Uganda/Kenia/East Africa: better not because of impending war between DRC, Ruanda and Uganda?
- Azores
- Southeast USA: Everglades, Okefenokee, pocosins, Great Dismal Swamp
- China

Other regional meetings:

- Scotland: 2025 (cf. IMCG 1984 and World Heritage of Flow Country)
- New Zealand
- Canada/Alberta

The GA applauds all proposals. Information about the 2026 field symposium will be communicated once a decision has been taken.

## **9. Any other business**

The chairman closes the GA.