



PRESS RELEASE

15 October 2015

1st Meeting of Initiatives for the Future of Great Rivers: rivers, contributors to energy transition and to the COP21

At the end of the first session of the IFGR held from 13 to 15 October in Lyon, Erik Orsenna, Chairman of this international multidisciplinary observatory founded by CNR a year ago, presented the first initiatives to make rivers strong levers for energy transition and the combat against climate change. These works, focusing on 14 of the world's rivers, demonstrated the need for managing this water resource well through dialogue and exchanging experiences.

The IFGR will hand the synthesis to Laurent Fabius, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and President of the COP 21, Ségolène Royal, Minister of Ecology, Sustainable Development, and Energy, and Laurence Tubiana, French Ambassador responsible for the negotiations on climate change, before this major world summit on the climate.

Stating the case for rivers in the international debate on the combat against climate change

Although rivers are one of the resources most affected by climate change, they are also real levers for action, as they are reservoirs of freshwater, sources of renewable energy, economic corridors for low pollutant-emission transport, and vectors of territorial development. All these uses can be enhanced by getting rivers to dialogue with each other and by sharing good river management practices. This is the role of the IFGR, which held its first session in Lyon.

The management bodies of 6 rivers, institutional representatives (Voies Navigable de France, Hidrovia*, and OMVS**) and experts (climatologists, anthropologists, economists, and geographers), demanded that rivers should not be forgotten in the movement towards energy transition or in the combat against climate change.

Furthermore, the IFGR was invited to participate on the stands of the river managers during the COP 21 held at Le Bourget.

**South American maritime waterway*

***Organisation for the development of the River Senegal*

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Launching the first initiatives

The first three directions of work were explored:

- **Flood prevention:** work together to pool warning systems to optimize flood prevention systems more effectively;
- **Establish a frame of reference for good river governance** following a comparative institutional and legal analysis; it is necessary to avoid fragmenting rivers, promote integrated management and foster dialogue between upstream and downstream regions;
- **Improve the energetic performance of river transport** with emphasis given to short-distance transport.

Furthermore, the IFGR is pushing for new cooperation between rivers around themes such as development in floodable areas.

The members also insisted that the IFGR's works should be linked to academic works and their application in a Fab/Lab which will gather start-ups whose activities are related to rivers and that will offer innovative applications.

Works shared between all the stakeholders

Prior to the contribution made to the COP 21, the IFGR declared its desire to share its initial conclusions with the stakeholders of the Rhone Valley.

The president of the Rhône-Alpes Regional Council and Gérard Collomb, Senator and Mayor of Greater Lyon, met the members of the IGFR on Wednesday morning. In the afternoon, elected representatives including Cécile Helle, Mayor of Avignon, and representatives of associations, chambers of agriculture and commerce and industry attended a session dedicated to presenting the results of the IGFR's works. Jean-Louis Bal, the President of the Syndicate of Renewable Energies, was also present.

The next session is scheduled to be held in Canada in April 2016

The Initiatives for the Future of Great Rivers has been conceived on the basis of biannual meetings, one in France and one abroad. The second session will be held in Canada in spring 2016 and will focus on the example of the Saint Lawrence River.

From now till then, the IFGR will pursue its works and meetings with the management bodies of other rivers: the Mississippi, the Volga and the Nile.



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INITIATIVES FOR THE FUTURE OF GREAT RIVERS

Rivers stand at the heart of current climatic and environmental problems. Confronted by these challenges, “Initiatives for the Future of Great Rivers” provides an original forum for high level dialogue between river management bodies, representatives of institutions and international experts (climatologists, economists, geographers, etc.).

To ensure that the debates are rooted in the concrete reality of rivers, “Initiatives for the Future of Great Rivers”, founded in 2014 by CNR and chaired by Erik Orsenna, is composed of several colleges: the college of the 14 permanent members, the Rivers college, the steering committee, the innovation committee, the Fab/Lab (to develop innovative projects with start-ups), and the college of PhDs and trainees.

The first 14 rivers concerned are:

- the Parana and Maroni in South America
- the Mississippi and Sainte Lawrence in North America
- the Nile and Senegal in Africa
- the Red River, Yellow River, Mekong and Ganges in Asia
- the Elbe, Danube, Volga and Rhone in Europe.

CNR

CNR (Compagnie Nationale du Rhône) is France’s leading producer of 100% renewable electricity and the holder of the multipurpose concession to operate the Rhone from the Swiss border to the Mediterranean: electricity production, river navigation and port sites, water for irrigation and other agricultural uses.

It produces more than 15 TWh a year from its mix of hydro-, wind and solar power. An expert in optimizing intermittent energies, CNR masters the entire value chain and plays a major role on the European electricity markets. Its acknowledged expertise in hydroelectric and river engineering allows it to offer services covering studies, assistance and design and construction management all over the world for developing rivers of all sizes.

Acting in favour of the sustainable development of the Rhone Valley is an integral component of CNR’s development model based on the redistribution of part of the value generated to the territories in which the electricity is produced. This close link with the territories has been strengthened for more than 10 years through the implementation of the Missions in the General Interest formulated in concert with the stakeholders.