

Foreword

There is much evidence to show that progress in this world is not achieved by establishing institutions or through the application of rules and regulations, however worthy they might be, but by the initiative and hard work of individuals. Certainly, this is true for the International Association of Hydrological Sciences (IAHS) and its activities, which depend so much on the commitment and enthusiasm of its individual members. It is clear that the future of the Association will be in the hands of its younger members and so it is particularly important to maintain their enthusiasm and to involve them in setting out a vision of the future in which they can see a role for themselves.

This is not easy to achieve through the established mechanisms of the Association and so another route was sought some 22 years ago when IAHS established a working group of young hydrologists to consider and report on the prospects for hydrology through to the end of the 20th century. Their report was completed and published in 1987 under the title: *Hydrology 2000*.

In the late 1990s, as the start of the new millennium approached, the idea was launched to establish a similar group and in July 2001 the Hydrology 2020 Working Group was set up with a membership representative of all branches of the hydrological sciences and all regions of the world. They were charged with looking into the potential and opportunities of hydrological sciences in the foreseeable future.

Quite rightly, they have not spent too much time looking back over their shoulders at what was written in 1987, but have focused on what lies ahead and in doing so they have adopted a much broader view than their predecessors. They have addressed a wider range of topics and have taken the initiative of making more explicit recommendations on many of the subjects that they have considered.

One thing that has been retained, however, is the independence given to those concerned. Both then and now, the working groups have written their own reports and drawn their own conclusions. On more than one occasion, but particularly in Foz do Iguaçu in April 2005, they presented their findings for discussion by the wider IAHS community. While they have surely considered the comments offered by us older hydrologists, no-one has been looking over their shoulders or filtering what they have written and so this report is entirely theirs. This is as it should be because the future of hydrology itself is in their hands and those of their colleagues.

It is my pleasant duty, on behalf of the Association, to thank the members of the Hydrology 2020 Working Group for all the work they have put into this report. In particular, we owe a considerable debt of gratitude to Taikan Oki for his enthusiasm and untiring efforts as chair of the Group over the past four years.

Finally, may I suggest that the greatest compliment we can pay to the members of the Hydrology 2020 Working Group for the efforts they have expended on our behalf

would be to use their report as a basis for a continuing debate on the future of the hydrological sciences. They were not expected to concentrate so much on providing accurate predictions of future developments, but to create enthusiasm for future challenges. Some will agree with their analyses, others may not. Some will endorse their recommendations, while others may offer alternative proposals. The important thing, however, is to open and maintain a constructive debate on the future. This is important, not only as a basis for planning the activities of IAHS, but for promoting the further development of the hydrological sciences themselves—looking over our shoulders from time to time, but focussing always on the challenging road ahead.

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IAHS President, 2003–2009