

EDITORIAL

It is time again to catch up on news concerning SNS affairs. The most important news is that the "soap opera" called the merger between SQS and SNS has come to an end. My correspondence on this subject goes back to February 2001 but it was not until August 2001 that SNS received a memo saying that the merger met approval of INQUA and IUGS and requesting SNS to take charge of the organisational and scientific aspects of the merger. Simple merging of the two subcommissions into a new organisation with 2 chairs and 40 voting members would be unworkable. The SNS bureau (October 2001) therefore proposed to disband the SQS and to include some of their members in a new WG on Pleistocene chronostratigraphy and to put this proposal for vote. ICS welcomed our proposal and planned to present the re-organisation at the Urbino meeting (June 2002). At this meeting ICS also planned to vote on the abolishment of the term Quaternary on the GTS, i.e. the Neogene would then include Miocene, Pliocene, Pleistocene, and Holocene. This was the state of affairs communicated to you in the editorial of [Newsletter 8](#). By the end of 2001 things took an unexpected turn. Anticipating approval in Urbino for the merger Davide Castradori (intended chairman of the new WG on Pleistocene chronostratigraphy) began to seek nominees for the new WG and contacted Phil Gibbard (secretary of SQS). And then the hell broke loose. In spite of the fact that the merger was discussed between ICS and INQUA with the blessing of IUGS and communicated to the chairman of SQS (Prof. Ch. Schluchter) it came painfully clear that no one else within the SQS was aware of the ongoing re-organisation. A dense exchange of emails during the Xmas season clarified the situation and was followed by 2 meetings between representatives of SNS and SQS one at Schiphol airport (February 2002) and another in Utrecht (May 2002). We agreed to maintain the term Quaternary on the GTS and to understand the merger in terms of amalgamating both subcommissions into a new subcommission on Neogene and Quaternary stratigraphy (SNGS). There was also agreement to reduce the number of members to 20 at the beginning of the new term and on the strategy that should lead to a formal subdivision of the Pleistocene. Both ICS and IUGS were happy with the outcome of these meetings. Then things again took an unexpected turn. At Urbino it became evident that there was much opposition against the proposed merger but the decision to re-establish the SQS was postponed until later after ICS received the science and management plan to be written by Phil Gibbard who represented the SQS in Urbino. Later in July ICS set the outlines of the science and management plan in a memo sent to the IUGS, INQUA and all the ICS chairs. After strong objections from the INQUA chair (Nick Shackleton) and Phil Gibbard the ICS decided this memo to be unwritten.

This is in short what we have called the merger soap opera. Presumably this soap comes to a definitive end at a meeting planned in August between representatives of ICS, INQUA and IUGS. Anticipating a happy end the SNS bureau gives a cordial welcome to the new SQS bureau and hopes that the short and forced contacts between SNS and SQS may find a more permanent basis in our joint mission to define a standardized upper Cenozoic chronostratigraphic scale. The SNS bureau regrets that it has spent more time in this affair than it spent in its core business, viz. proposing GSSPs for Neogene stages.

What more news do I have? Good news comes from the Serravallian and Tortonian WG. Frits Hilgen (chairman of this WG) organized last May a very successful meeting in Coldigioco (near Ancona) with the purpose to choose the definitive section and guiding criterion for the definition of the Tortonian Stage. A report of this meeting is enclosed. Other news concerns the participation of the SNS bureau in a workshop on the subdivision of the Quaternary held in Leiden (July 13) and organised by Thijs van Kolfschoten and Phil Gibbard (both nominees for the new SQS bureau). At this workshop Davide Castradori submitted and commented on a position paper "Quaternary chronostratigraphy and the establishment of related standards" prepared by the Italian

commission on Stratigraphy, while Frits Hilgen gave an introduction on the current status of Neogene chronostratigraphy. Discussions made clear that subdividing the Pleistocene into 3 units is preferred but Neogene and Quaternary stratigraphers held different opinions with respect to questions whether these units should be ranked as stage or sub-series and whether GSSP sections should be defined in marine or terrestrial sequences. Anyway the subdivision of the Pleistocene is now in the hands again of the new SQS.

To conclude I wish you all a sunny summer from rainy Utrecht. Note that several new enclosures are added.

Best regards,

Willem Jan Zachariasse/Chairman SNS