IAGLR
LAKES Letter

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This issue focuses on international collaboration and perspectives from around the globe

Toward a global, large lake network

by **Richard Ogutu-Ohwayo**



Since its formation, IAGLR has played a leading role in promoting research and communication to support policy for management of the world's large lakes. This has been done through its annual research conference, its *Journal of Great Lakes Research*, and regional meetings. Yet these efforts have mainly concentrated on the Laurentian Great Lakes of North America.

However, IAGLR has begun making efforts to strengthen its role internationally. A majority of its members—62%—support this focus of expanding the association's international engagement. This expanded focus is not simply an exercise in growth, but is, instead, an effort to enhance the global network of freshwater sciences so we can better address the challenges facing these critical, large, freshwater resources. By internationalizing IAGLR, we are broadening our perspectives, approaches, ideas, and knowledge for understanding these challenges. We are growing our networks and building trust for increased information exchange and the ability to work across borders on these inter-jurisdictional resources. This will require a shift in our collective mindset from one that focuses on the interests of our "own" lakes to one that visualizes all large lakes of the world as one global network with subnetworks at continental, regional, and national levels.

As one of the oldest associations of great lakes research, and due to its being from the developed north, IAGLR is well positioned to lead this shift by incrementally scaling its efforts to encompass other lake systems of the world. IAGLR has made some progress in strengthening its role internationally: it has conducted joint meetings with other organizations such as the European Large Lakes Symposium; it has published special sections in its journal on non-Laurentian large lakes such as Lake Baikal and the African Great Lakes; it has conducted sessions on other large lakes at its annual conferences; it has provided international student travel scholarships to attend its conferences; and, in 2018, it added a member from outside the United States and Canada to its board of directors.

At the board meeting last June, I was tasked as IAGLR's first international board member to engage other members in developing suggestions to further strengthen the association internationally. Working with IAGLR Secretary Jessica Ives to initiate consultations on the matter, we formed a committee with representatives from many lakes around the world. The committee has discussed an initial set of activities for IAGLR to consider undertaking. These activities include promoting the formation of networks at continental, regional, and national levels and identifying opportunities for collaboration among researchers and institutions studying different lakes. These efforts would ultimately lead to the formation of one global, large lake network through which IAGLR can, over time, strengthen its role internationally for the good of the world's large lakes. I encourage IAGLR members to provide any additional suggestions to help achieve this vision by contacting me at ogutuohwayo@yahoo.com.

A researcher on African lakes, Richard Ogutu-Ohwayo recently retired from the National Fisheries Resources Research Institute in Uganda after 42 years of service. He serves as IAGLR's first international board member, associate editor of the Journal of Great Lakes Research, *and chair of IAGLR's newly formed International Committee. He is forming the African Lakes Network to build capacity, mobilize, and share information and data for management of the resources of African lakes.*