



**Mountaineering Commission report  
to the Management Committee  
to be held at Kalymnos  
by Pierre Humblet  
April 2010**

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As usual the Mountaineering Commission met twice since the last Management Committee meeting at Porto, i.e. in fall at Delhi invited by the IMF and at Montserrat in April, hosted by FEDME. In India the meeting gathered the Mount. Com. with the TSWG and the PETZL Foundation too and in Spain Mount. Com. plus TSWG and LEWG. Pierre Humblet and Steve Long, in his capacity as TSWG chair, had intermediate meetings with the UIAA President and Executive Board to discuss the TSWG future.

**November 2009 meetings at Delhi:**

The meetings were hosted by the Indian Mountaineering Foundation (IMF) and it was attended by delegates and guests from 3 different continents, highlighting the strength and value of the Commission's work on a global scale. In the weeks before the meetings, two delegates from the Mountaineering Commission, Claudio Melchiorri and Ron Withehead assisted at an **international mountaineering training camp** in India, with the purpose of teaching the alpine style ascents.

During the series of meetings the delegates met the outgoing IMF president, Major Ahluwalia and attended the **IMF General Assembly** which included a fascinating address from Dr. Gill, the Indian Minister



*Pierre Humblet receives a ceremonial ice axe from Major Ahluwalia, IMF President (p. Steve long)*

for Sport and Youth, as well as the presentation of lifetime achievement awards for eminent male and female mountaineers.

AVM P.C.S. Rautela, Col H.S. Chauhan and S.M.Chamoli presented the group with an overview of the history of the IMF since its formation 51 years ago, shortly after the first ascent of Everest. In addition to a long history of traditional mountaineering activities the IMF has also been involved in recent years with the development of climbing walls throughout the country, with an ambitious future programme and increasing participation and success on the international competition climbing scene.



*Dr S. Gill, Indian Minister for Sport and Youth addressing the IMF General Assembly (p. Steve long)*

The Mountaineering Commission has recently undertaken **collaborative work with the Petzl Foundation** in order to assist federations to establish their own autonomous national leader training programmes. Jean-Jacques Elouet, General Secretary of the Petzl Foundation, described recent work carried out in Nepal, where the UIAA Mountaineering Commission has been a go between with NMA, as well as the imminent completion of a training manual to assist those countries that are currently unable to produce their own training

material. This fundamental technical training is not focused on elites and high altitude ascents but aims to develop the skills of grassroots mountaineers who will be able to cascade to others the education they received. During the week the IMF and Petzl Foundation, under the Mountaineering Commission umbrella, negotiated a pilot scheme to be run at two centres in India commencing in 2010.

The **Training Standard Working Group** (TSWG) agreed upon streamlined administrative procedures that should reduce the workload, whilst improving communication through use of templates and action triggers.

*Steve Long, Chair of the Training Standard Working Group in front of the IMF headquarters.*



With regards to the TSWG necessary reform, Pierre Humblet outlined the delicate balance between satisfying the UIAA's need to identify additional income streams and protecting core services that are identified as a natural component of the provision made by the UIAA in return for subscription.

The Safety Commission is working with, and charging, manufacturers for gear to be bought by individuals, whereas the Mountaineering Commission is working with the Federations: the context is definitively different.

We should avoid trying to compensate the loss of fees due to reductions in membership by incomes that could jeopardize the remaining membership! Ideally new incomes should come from outside the membership.

Our human resources are limited (currently 4 or 5 persons) and it was discussed whether we could be able to work inside and outside the membership circle and what is the priority.

The Mountaineering Commission is facing increasing demand for accreditation from UIAA members, but also non-members. Some of the latter feel that they are blocked from accreditation due to the historical structure of the UIAA which had led in places to a "first-come, first served" approach to membership.

The Mountaineering Commission is doubtful of the applications from the UIAA membership remaining in case of charging for the services. Unfortunately the federations who have the biggest needs could be the first to leave.

Pierre Humblet suggested drawing a basic distinction between the services provided by the TSWG to member federations and outside associations. The latter could be charged including not only the costs but a substantial profit. On the other side the costs could be charged to the member federations taking into account their realistic possibilities. To generate incomes we could distinguish too between the accreditation and the use of the logo.

A balance must be struck between the cost of managing a sustainable level of moderation with professional values and the ability of a federation to pay. One possible solution is for means-tested charging: perhaps based on the local currency cost of individual federation membership.

Ron Whitehead's report from a recent moderation visit to Bezengi Mountaineering Camp in **Russia** was approved by the TSWG and every assistance will be offered to help this highly respected establishment reach the UIAA standard for High Alpine instructor training schemes.

The International Federation of Mountain Guides (IFMGA, also known as UIAGM) has expressed a desire to meet the Mountaineering Commission, to investigate the relationship between voluntary and professional qualifications - an important area of debate.

The Mountaineering Commission is investigating the comparison of climbing-related accidents between different countries; this project is being coordinated by Chiaki Aoyama from Japan who gave a presentation to follow his initial introduction (given at the MC meeting at Le Tour in March 2009). A recent tragic accident in Japan involving risk management misunderstandings leading to hypothermia and numerous deaths was discussed: this is a disturbingly common underlying factor in large-scale accidents and underlines the importance of developing and marketing high-quality training programmes for leaders.

Further work on the project collating comparative technical gradings has been requested by Silvio Calvi of the UIAA Management

Committee, since it constitutes a frequently asked question at the UIAA office. Ersan Basar from TDF volunteered to manage this project.



*From left to right, Mr SP Shamoli, AVM PCS Rautela, Pierre Humblet, Alban Jarry, Jean-Jacques Eleouet, Chiaki Aoyama, Ersan Başar, Patrick Lamarque, Ron Withehead (p. S. Long).*

The **April 2010 UIAA Mountaineering Commission** meeting was held at Montserrat, Barcelona, kindly hosted by FEDME and with a significant attendance of 20 delegates and 2 Executive Board members. As usually at that time we held a general meeting and two separates for the LEWG and TSWG.

Amongst the numerous issues tackled during the discussions we will focus on the following topics:

The Mountaineering Commission drafted a new **Mission Statement** to replace the obsolete one in the 2000 Strategic Plan:

*“Mission*

*To promote best practice by identifying and addressing ethical, technical & training, and legal issues of international importance.*

*Objectives and Goals:*

- *To review issues of international importance in Mountaineering.*

- *To monitor and advise on current practice and review the UIAA Mountains Ethics Declaration accordingly.*
- *To help the Federations improve the technical education they provide, in collaboration with UIAA partners.*
- *To develop and operate UIAA model training standards and approve their use by federations.*
- *To hold seminars on model training standards.*
- *To assist in the exchange of technical and teaching material between Federations.*
- *To promote access to basic teaching materials.*
- *To develop a scheme for UIAA approval of guidebooks which facilitate international use, using a revised UIAA scale of difficulties and standardised symbols.*
- *To issue an international accident report form and promote its use to collect international data.*
- *To collate the information from existing accident statistics.*
- *To create a standardized database on accident statistics, and exchange relevant information internationally.*
- *To investigate and make recommendations on legal issues affecting Mountaineering.*
- *To develop the existing case law database.*
- *To support the UIAA Office with legal issues.*
- *To collaborate with other Commissions and organisations and develop internet-based databases”.*

**The future development of the TSWG** was discussed further:

The TSWG has been so successful that its voluntary resources are becoming hard to manage. After several meetings and exchanges of documents between UIAA President, Pierre Humblet, Steve Long and Ron Whitehead, this was discussed at the UIAA Executive Meeting in Amsterdam in March 2010. In the aftermath of this meeting and on the basis of this exchange of ideas SL finalized a PPP with an overview of the standards: their purpose, what they provide to member federations, the duties of the TSWG, and who they are available to.

The first “hot” issue was the TSWG possible work “out of the UIAA federations”. Historically the TSWG has worked with National Federations, and occasionally with organisations elected by a National Federation to provide training for it. However, more recently, other organisations have shown an interest in becoming UIAA accredited. These fit into 2 groups: Not-for-Profit Groups and Commercial Groups. The Mountaineering Commission considered that this has the potential to increase revenue to the UIAA, but conversely, along with an increase in the number of countries seeking accreditation and the future need for re-evaluation, will create a large amount of extra work for the TSWG. If the TSWG work expands in this manner then the work must be prioritized and the member Federations must always receive the highest priority. The ambiguity of “the UIAA member federations right of refusal”, i.e. whether they should be able to veto another application was discussed but no general consensus could be reached by the Mountaineering Commission on this issue.

Steve Long proposed a structure as to how an expanded accreditation system could be structured, and the prerequisites for those who organize and run national training schemes. This provides a more rigid structure that will be easier and more efficient to implement and operate, and includes a system of revalidating approved training schemes. It would also professionalise the moderating and assessment process by paying moderators/assessors who are approved to perform these functions. The application process would ideally be web-based with a database back-end, with a degree of automation.

A discussion followed that addressed the human and administration resources that would be required by the TSWG and the UIAA, and the costs involved, of any such an expansion. The proposed structure should also have a possible pricing structure; Pierre Humblet questioned whether this would be acceptable to National Federations, especially with regards to a possible “annual fee”, and Jan Bonding raised the issue of costs of collecting fees. Ron Whitehead felt that the costs of running the scheme in this way would be negligible when considering the number of students that would pass through an accredited national scheme.

There are also concerns from the IFMGA that there may be conflicts of interest, although Steve Long demonstrated that this would not be the

case since the UIAA scheme only deals with voluntary leadership and *ad hoc* paid work, and even has the potential to be used as a pre-requisite for guide schemes.

This presentation, which should also be given to the next UIAA management Committee by Pierre Humblet, contains three slides that remain controversial regarding specially the member federations' right of refusal and fees.



*How to enjoy free time after hard discussions at Montserrat!*

The TSWG agreed that a **training seminar** about quality assurance is high priority. A date will be arranged for the earliest practicable opportunity to give people sufficient notice.

**The LEWG case law database:** This now includes 54 cases, which are searchable by keyword, that are of importance to mountaineering from 5 countries. The definition of keywords needs to be improved. Chiaki Aoyama also has a partially completed database of 25 Japanese cases, which has a similar difficulty with keywords; the members of the LEWG will collaborate in order to establish a common system. Bénédicte Cazanave has collated details of some additional French cases. The LEWG continues to encourage persons from different jurisdictions to contribute cases.

The possibility of publishing the database on the UIAA website was discussed. However, there are difficulties with this: the LEWG does not want to enable lawyers to use the database in a way that may be adverse to the interests of the Member Federations. More thought, planning and discussion is required before the database is made available to persons outside the LEWG.

The LEWG will soon issue a short report about the increase in the frequency of climbing wall accidents that have given rise to civil and criminal court cases

**2002 LEWG report:** The LEWG is revising this report and will publish the overview on the UIAA website in the near future. The remainder of the report will be revised to compare legal approaches in different countries, and this will eventually be published on the UIAA website.

**UIAA Disciplinary Panel and UIAA Appeals Panel:** Martin Wragg, LEWG secretary, is the chair of the UIAA Disciplinary Appeals Body. He described the disciplinary and appeals procedure in the UIAA and the commitments the Disciplinary and Appeals Panels have to the UIAA. The Appeals Panel has only 3 members, from the LEWG, and couldn't fulfil his duties in case of one arbitrator unavailability. He said that more members are required for them to operate effectively. MW proposes that the UIAA Disciplinary Panel and UIAA Appeals Panels be reconstituted as Tribunals and not Commissions in order to reduce bureaucracy. A proposal will be sent to the Chair of the Disciplinary Panel for his comments before submission to the UIAA Management Committee. The Mountaineering Commission support of Martin's proposal was unanimous. Bénédicte Cazanave, in her capacity of judge, volunteered to join the Appeals panel. She should be designated by the Management Committee.

**FEDME:** Gabriel Porti presented an overview of the Spanish Federation (FEDME) and the Spanish training system. Jordi Magrina and Arnau Anguera gave a presentation about the Catalan Federation (Federacio d'Entitats Excursionists de Catalunya) and the Catalan mountain school (Escola Catalana d'Alta Muntanya). Txomin Uriarte, in his capacity of President of the Basque Federation, EMF, explained their project for renovating their educational program.

**Ethics:** Phil Wickens described the UIAA document 'To Bolt or Not to Be', which identifies the UIAA's stance on the placing of fixed equipment. This is now over 10 years old and, considering changes in climbing, ethics and conservation, it is due for a review. He proposed that a Bolting Working Group be set up within the Mountaineering

Commission to identify current bolting policy in the member federations, draw up a proposed UIAA policy, invite comment from the member federations, and formally propose the policy to the Management Committee as a Fixed Equipment Declaration.

The situation in several countries was summarised. Since there are obvious legal implications it was recommended that a Legal Expert be represented in the Working Group and an Environmental expert would be beneficial as well.

Ersan Başar gave an overview of **grading systems**, what they represent and how they compare. Comparisons can often be difficult due to differences in what different grading systems represent, such as pure technical difficulty, route safety, seriousness and commitment.

Comparison tables on the internet are often incorrect and misleading. We should correct the Wikipedia statement on the UIAA asserted defective quality too. But for us to compile an accurate comparison table we need to ask for nationals who have travelled widely to formally compare their own grading system with the UIAA grading system. It was suggested that each member federation in world regions using a specific climbing grades difficulties' scale be contacted for this comparison. Claudio Melchiorri noted that we have also to consider artificial climbing scales, as well as bouldering, winter ascents etc. This is something that the CAI has been investigating. He will ask if their investigation can be translated into English to pass this on to Ersan Başar. Francisco Aguado developed the possible use of colours to represent specific aspects of route difficulties such as level of commitment required

**Accidents Statistics:** Chiaki Aoyama presented a report on this issue in different countries. He summarised the federations and mountain rescue organisations that collect accident and rescue information in and out the different National Federations, and the information that would ideally be collected to allow comparison between different countries. The definition of terms used by different countries are often very different, such as the term 'mountaineering', and this will need to be standardised to allow comparisons between different systems. Martin Wragg, secretary, and Renée Hopster, chair of the LEWG agreed to assist Chiaki Aoyama in this regard.

Pierre Humblet reminded that there is UIAA lexis of technical terms for five languages that should be consulted to standardize an accurate use. This was produced by the UIAA Documentation Commission in collaboration with ENSA and FFME in 1995 (ISBN 2-908330-10-05) and should be available from each of the National Federations. We should always refer to this lexicon. It would be useful if this was available online.

The Mountaineering Commission feels that the form to collect the data needs to be short to ensure that it is completed, and, for legal reasons, that it should distinguish between general and confidential information.

Ron Whitehead has looked at and questioned the value of assigning **UIAA book labels to Guide books**. Its purpose is to confirm compliance with a standard defined content. RW feels that it would be difficult and time-consuming to review each book; to make it meaningful and consistent a common set of criteria for assessment is required. Pierre Humblet clarified that the purpose of the label already existing is to ensure that:

- Presentation is standardised with minimal requirements (rescue, environment, etc.)
- Common symbols are used in diagrams.

It is envisaged that each Federation will provide the Mountaineering Commission with a list of guidebook publishers in their country so that they can be contacted them about the book label. Since a guide-book may meet the criteria, but still not be a good guide-book, it was suggested that the award of a Book Label could be recommended by the National Federation.

The President emphasized the necessity to discuss with the Management Committee a financial policy for awarding the UIAA guide books label.

Ron Whitehead presented a structure for best guide-book practices. It was felt that this is of value, but care is needed because it is potentially very time-consuming and will require administration, and if a guidebook meets the criteria and is awarded the UIAA label, other information that is not included in the label criteria, such as technical information, must be correct.



From left to right, first row: Borut Vidovic, Gabriel Porti, Xabier Ezeiza Barrena; Second row: Bénédicte Cazanave, Renée Hopster, Claudio Melchiorri, Christian Frischknecht, Jan Bonding, Txomin Uriarte Chiaki Aoyama, Ersan Başar, Jordi Magrina, Arnau Anguera ; Third row: Martin Wragg, Phil Wickens, Pierre Humblet, Steve Long, Ron Whitehead, Patrick Lamarque, Paco Aguado

Many other topics were considered too. We couldn't mention in this short report the valuable work undertaken by many members. For further details please read the meetings minutes.

On behalf of the Mountaineering Commission

Pierre Humblet, President.

Renée Hopster, Chair of the LEWG and Steve Long, Chair of the TSWG

April 17<sup>th</sup> 2010.