NEWS BULLETIN

WWW. IUPAP.ORG SPRING 2001 EDITION

Letter from Iupap President, Burton Richter

ThisThis seThis seems to hThis seems to have been a particularly busy year for IUPAPIUPAP which has kept the members of the ExecIUPAP which has kept the members of the Executive Council traveling perhaps more than we would like. Here IHere I want to report to you on some of the highlights.

COUNCIL AND CHAIRS MEETING

TheThe Annual Meeting of tThe Annual Meeting of the Executive Council and CommissioCommissionCommission ChaiCommission Chairs took place in Beijing, China, last October.October. This system of bringing together the CommissionCommission Chairs with thCommission Chairs with the CounCommission Chairs with the Council began after the 19961996 General Assembly i1996 General Assembly in S1996 General Assembly in Sweden, and it has proved toto be anto be an effective method ofto be an effective method of bringing people together to discussdiscuss problems that cross thediscuss problems that cross the boundaries between the sub-disciplinarysub-disciplinary commissions. At this meetingsub-disciplinary commissions. At this meeting we also hadhad an opportunity to meet with seniorhad an opportunity to meet with senior Chinesehad an opportunity to meet with senior Chinese officials andand discussand discuss China sand discuss China s situation with respect to support of physicsphysics resephysics research. Various subgroups visited some of thethe Cthe Chinethe Chinese scientific institutes and universities to get aa first-hand view of physics in China. China hasa first-hand view of physics in China. China has a first-hand view of physics in China restructuringrestructuring its research program torestructuring its research program to improve its focus andand effectiveness, and Iand effectiveness, and I have seen an impressive change sincesince I since I first began to visit China regularly in the earlsince I first began to visit China regularly in the earlsince I first began to visit China regularly in the early 1980 s.

A major agenda item for the meeting was a review of thethe draft of thethe draft of the revised Statutes and Bythe draft of the revised Statutes and By Laws of IUPAP. WeWe are trWe are trying We are trying to bring these up to date and, with the inputinput from the Commission Chairs, a new input from the Commission Chairs, a new draft input from the Commission Chairs preparationpreparation thatpreparation that will soonpreparation that will soon be sent to the national liaison committeescommittees for their comments. committees for their comments. The committees for their comments. The new version will bebe broughtbe brought to thebe brought to the 2002 General Assembly in Berlin for final approval.

TheThe Working GroupThe Working Group on Women in Physics setThe Working Group on Women in Physics set up at the 19991999 Atlanta1999 Atlanta Gene1999 Atlanta General Assembly has been very active. TheThe Council approved the proposed International ConferenceConference on Women inConference on Women in Physics which is reportedConference on Women in Physics which is reported in greater detail below.in greater detail below. We are now seeking funding in greater detail below. We are now seeking funding so thatthat there canthat there can be broad participation in this meeting in that there can be broad participation in this meeting by delegations from developing countries.

TheThe Working Group on Communications The Working Group on theirtheir final reporttheir final report andtheir final report and recommendations problemsproblems identified were problems identified were thproblems journalsjournals in a rapidjournals in a rapidljournals in a rapidly changing accessaccess to scientiaccess to scientific access to scientific countries countries. Ancountries. An International countries. An International beingbeing organized for this fallbeing organized for this fall. RepresentativesRepresentatives of scieRepresentatives of scientif Representatives thethe scientificthe scientific community willthe scientific community will thethe scientific literature cathe scientific literature canthe scientific literature termterm as electronic systems for publishiterm as electronic systems for changechange.

WORLD CONFERENCE OF PHYSICAL SOCIETIES

TheThe third inThe third in a series of World Conferences ofThe third in a series of World Conferences of Physical SocietiesSocieties took place in Berlin on December 15 and 16, 2000 2000, in conjunction with the celebration2000, in conjunction with the celebration of ananniversaryanniversary of Planck s quantum hypothesis, anniversary meetingmeeting was organimeeting was organized meeting was organized by the SSocietySociety and was attended by representatives from physicalphysical societies from every continent, together with somesome representatives of governments, some representatives of governments allall ofall of science in many of the poorest parts of theall of science in many of the world is bad. Mais bad. Many goveis bad. Many governments do not recognize sciencescience has to science has to play in their economic science has to play a havhavehave nohave no coherent policy for science, little funding available available and little opportunity for their scientists to interactinteract with the worldinteract with the world scientific community. travel travel grants that go totravel grants that go to thetravel grants that go to confconferenceconferences are an important means of connection somesome of the scientists from these some of the scientists from these needsneeds to needs to thinkneeds to think more about these issues. There is ananan obvious answer to an obvious answer to some of the problems but in countriescountries funding is lacking forcountries funding is lacking for lack of worldworld world throworld through the Internet with sufficient bandwidth.

There There was an extensive dThere was an extensive discussion buthut no conclusiobut no conclusions on howbut no conclusions on how to bestbest scibest scientbest scientists from the developing world leave their homehome home countries never to return because of a lack of opopportunityopportunity to do science at home. This is an opportunity that thatthat organizations like IUPAP canthat organizations like IUPAP can play a thanthan ethan estabthan establishing real collaborations with scientists in thethe devthe developing world that would allow them to do

serious work at home.

ICSU

The International Council for Science (ICSU) is an organization whose members include 26 scientific unions and 75 national members from all disciplines, and 75 national members. Its function is to bring to bear the expertise of different areas of science on problems that are fundamentally interdisciplinary in nature. The ICSU membership has come to feel that ICSU has begun to spread much too thinly over far too many problems. ICSU has begun a review of its large collection of interdisciplinary programs, is reorganizing its grant-giving programs, is giving serious peer review to applications for these programs, and is bringing the scientific unions together to discuss ICSU's future (the purpose of this meeting). ICSU's scientific union members include the physical sciences, the biomedical sciences, and the social sciences. Thus, at least in theory, the resources are present to put some serious science behind such notions as sustainable development, energy resources, and the environment. The meeting was only a beginning.

I was struck by how little the ICSU Executive Board knew about the activities of the scientific unions. The meeting gave the presidents of the unions an opportunity to get to know each other as well. One particular theme discussed was that of particular issues. The scientific community can, and does, recognize problems that will affect the world long before governments are really aware of them; global warming is an example. It is to be hoped that ICSU can develop a mechanism to develop a broad scientific community to bring such issues to the attention of governments long before they reach the crisis point.

WORKING GROUPS update

Working Group on Women in Physics

The IUPAP Working Group on Women in Physics has been planning a three-day International Conference on Women in Physics to be held at the Sorbonne in Paris, France on March 7 to 9, 2002. It is expected that 250 participants from over 60 countries (of which 25 will be invited by the IUPAP Working Group on Women in Physics) will attend the conference. Additional participants will be accommodated as space permits. The conference will be preceded by an Open Forum on March 6, 2002.

Internationally, women are seriously underrepresented in physics and in other fields, such as engineering, in which physics knowledge is an essential prerequisite. The nature and magnitude of the problem vary from country to country, however, and the goal of this conference is to bring together women physicists from around the world to review that data, discuss barriers, share success stories, improve participation globally, and develop appropriate strategies to improve the status of women in physics in their home countries. Themes given special emphasis include 1) attracting girls to study physics in schools and university, 2) the status of women in physics, 3) institutional structure and climate for women in physics, 4) getting women into the scientific leadership structure, 5) learning from regional differences in balancing family and career. Teams of physicists from around the world will be invited to participate in the conference. Each team will consist of a physicist who has experience in physics education and professional issues, a physicist who has experience in industry, and a physicist who has experience in government. Each team will be asked to prepare a report on the status of women in physics in each of the 46 IUPAP countries. Two weeks elsewhere when feasible. Two weeks elsewhere when feasible. Two weeks elsewhere when feasible